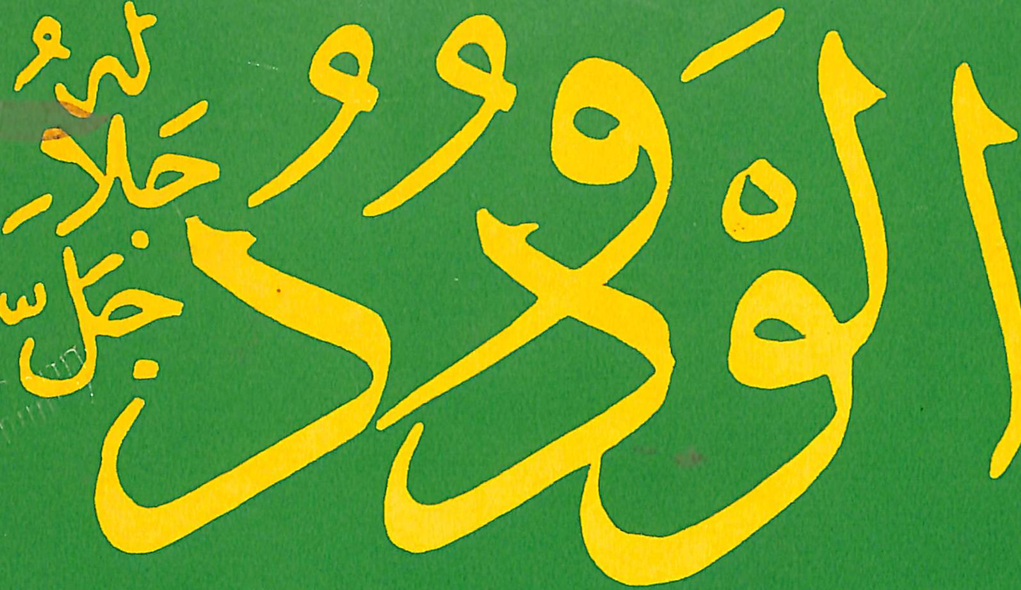


THE SUFI PATH OF LOVE

The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi

William C. Chittick

If you have lost heart
                in the Path of Love,
Flee to me without delay:
                I am a fortress invincible.
                        (Rūmī, D 17925)

SUNY Series in Islamic Spirituality
Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Editor

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State University of New York Press
Albany

Published by
State University of New York Press, Albany

Printed in the United States of America

For information, address State University of New York
Press, State University Plaza, Albany, N.Y., 12246

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, ‡Maulana, 1207-1273.
The Sufi path of love.

(SUNY series in Islamic spirituality)
Includes bibliographical references and indexes.
1. Sufism—Early works to 1800. I. Chittick,
William C. II. Title. III. Series.
BP188.9.J332513 1983 297'.4 82-19511
ISBN 0-87395-723-7
ISBN 0-87395-724-5 (pbk.)

10 9 8 7 6 5

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used to indicate the sources of quotations from Rūmī's works. For complete bibliographical details, see the Index of Sources.

- D — *Dīwān-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*. Italicized numerals indicate the number of a ghazal that has been translated in its entirety; Roman numerals indicate the lines of a partially translated poem.
- F — *Fīhi mā fīhi (Discourses of Rūmī)*. The first number indicates the page of the Persian text, the second of the Arberry translation.
- M — *Mathnawī*. Both book and verse are indicated.
- MK — *Maktūbāt*. First the number of the letter is given, then the pages on which it occurs in both the Istanbul and Tehran editions.
- MS — *Majālis-i sab'ah*. Page numbers are supplied.
- R — *Rubā'iyyāt*. The number of the poem is given.

Introduction

THE LIFE

Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī was born in Balkh in present-day Afghanistan in the year A.H. 604/A.D. 1207.[1] His father, Bahā' Walad, was a well-known preacher, jurisprudent, and Sufi who traced his spiritual lineage to Aḥmad Ghazzālī, brother of the more famous Muḥammad Ghazzālī and master of such well-known Sufis as 'Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī. As both a jurisprudent and a Sufi, Bahā' Walad was an authority in the exoteric sciences related to the Sharī'ah or Divine Law and the esoteric sciences related to the Ṭarīqah or Spiritual Path. In the former capacity he guided ordinary Moslems in their religious duties and in the latter he led a select group of disciples on the way of self-purification and spiritual perfection.

Bahā' Walad is the author of the *Ma'ārif* ("Divine Sciences"), a relatively lengthy compendium of spiritual teaching with which Rūmī was thoroughly familiar, the influence of its style and content upon his works being readily apparent. In the *Ma'ārif* Bahā' Walad demonstrates his firm faith in the Islamic revelation and undertakes an outspoken defense of its spiritual and esoteric teachings as opposed to the blind legalism of so many of his contemporaries. In many instances he wields the sword of intellectual and spiritual discernment against the policies and opinions of such men as Muḥammad Khwārazmshāh, the ruler of the time, who sometimes attended his sermons; and Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī, the famous theologian and author of several classics of Islamic thought, who also lived in Balkh.

Around the year 616/1219 the Mongols were moving ever closer to Balkh. Bahā' Walad left the city with his family and many followers

to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, knowing that he would probably never return. It is said that on the way he stopped in Nīshāpūr, where 'Aṭṭār was an old man, the acknowledged master of expressing Sufi teachings in verse. 'Aṭṭār presented him with a copy of his *Asrār-nāmah* ("The Book of Mysteries"), telling him, "Your son will soon be kindling fire in all the world's lovers of God."

After making the pilgrimage, Bahā' Walad set out for Asia Minor, where he was received warmly in Konya (in present-day Turkey) by the Seljuk king 'Alā' al-Dīn Kayqubād and his erudite vizier, Mu'īn al-Dīn Parwānah, who was later to become one of Rūmī's most influential devotees. Bahā' Walad soon occupied a high position among the city's scholars and was given the title *Sulṭān al-'ulamā'*, "Sultan of the men of knowledge."

In the tradition of his forebears, Rūmī began studying the exoteric sciences at an early age. These included Arabic grammar, prosody, the Koran, jurisprudence (the science of the Sharī'ah), principles of jurisprudence, Hadith (the sayings of the Prophet), Koranic commentary, history, dogmatics, theology, logic, philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy. By the time his father died in 628/1231, Rūmī was an acknowledged master in these fields. His name is to be found in the old sources among the lists of the doctors of the Law belonging to the Ḥanafī school. Given his erudition, it is not surprising that at the young age of twenty-four he was asked to assume his father's duties as a preacher and jurisprudent.

When Rūmī took over his father's position, he must already have been well versed in the spiritual techniques and esoteric sciences of Sufism. Since he had been raised by an outstanding Sufi master, he could hardly have avoided acquaintance with Sufism, even had he been so inclined. However this may be, most sources state that his formal training in Sufism began when Burhān al-Dīn Tirmidhī, a high-ranking disciple of Rūmī's own father, came to Konya in 629/1232. Until Tirmidhī's death in 638/1240, Rūmī practiced the discipline of the spiritual path under his guidance.

After Tirmidhī's death, Rūmī occupied himself mainly with preaching to and guiding the people of Konya. He gained widespread fame as one of the most respected doctors of the Law, while he continued his own spiritual practices as a Sufi adept. As S. H. Nasr has pointed out, by this time Rūmī was already an accomplished Sufi master.[2] In other words, he had traversed the stations of the Sufi path and realized the direct and immediate vision of God he discusses so constantly in his verse. But in spite of his spiritual attainments, Rūmī's outward life remained the same as it had always been. He preserved the customary activities and trappings of a staid and honored doctor of the Law. Sometimes he would discuss the spiritual mysteries in his sermons, but he never gave any outward indication that he was

any different than other jurisprudents and lawyers for having knowledge of them. Then in the year 642/1244 the enigmatic figure Shams al-Dīn of Tabriz came to Konya, and Rūmī was transformed.

> I was the country's sober ascetic, I used to teach from the pulpit—but destiny made me one of Thy hand-clapping lovers. (D 22784)[3]
>
> My hand always used to hold a Koran, but now it holds Love's flagon.
>
> My mouth was filled with glorification, but now it recites only poetry and songs. (D 24875–76)
>
> Passion for that Beloved took me away from erudition and reciting the Koran until I became as insane and obsessed as I am.
>
> I had followed the way of the prayer carpet and the mosque with all sincerity and effort. I wore the marks of asceticism to increase my good works.
>
> Love came into the mosque and said, "Oh great teacher! Rend the shackles of existence! Why are you tied to prayer carpets?
>
> Let not your heart tremble before the blows of My sword! Do you want to travel from knowledge to vision? Then lay down your head!
>
> If you are a profligate and a scoundrel, do justice to troublemaking! If you are beautiful and fair, why do you remain behind the veil?" (D 26404–08)

Shams-i Tabrīzī's influence upon Rūmī was decisive, for outwardly he was transformed from a sober jurisprudent to an intoxicated celebrant of the mysteries of Divine Love. One could say that without Shams, there would have been no Rūmī. Nevertheless, one must not overestimate the role that Shams played, since Rūmī was already an accomplished adept when Shams arrived on the scene. It is true that Shams may have guided him to the realization of certain stations of perfection to which he had not already gained access. But on the whole one must incline toward Nasr's interpretation:

> It seems that Shams al-Dīn was a divinely sent spiritual influence which in a sense "exteriorized" Rūmī's inner contemplative states in the form of poetry and set the ocean of his being into a motion which resulted in vast waves that transformed the history of Persian literature.[4]

After a period of one or two years during which Shams was Rūmī's constant companion, Shams left Konya suddenly, to Rūmī's great dismay. Rūmī was able to persuade him to return, but shortly

thereafter, around the year 645/1247 he again vanished, never to be seen again. According to some reports, he was murdered by jealous devotees. However this may be, he remained alive in Rūmī's heart and became the subject of numerous ghazals or "love poems" in the *Dīwān* which bears his name. Particularly poignant are the poems which sing of separation from Shams. But in these verses as in all of Rūmī's poetry, it quickly becomes clear that the outward form is but a veil over the inward meaning. Separation from Shams al-Dīn, the "Sun of Religion," was but the appearance; separation from the Divine Beloved, "the Sun of the Sun," was the reality.

Unlike most Sufi poets—or Persian poets in general—Rūmī practically never ends a ghazal with his own name, but either mentions no one or refers to Shams or certain other figures.[5] In most of these verses, Shams represents the image of the Divine Beloved, the Divine Sun, as reflected in the perfect saint. But Rūmī often seems to have substituted Shams's name for his own as an act of humility and an acknowledgment of Shams's decisive role in his own transformation. In such lines, although he is singing of Shams's perfection, in fact he is uttering the mysteries of his own union with God and the exalted spiritual station this implies.

> Indeed, Shams-i Tabrīzī is but a pretext—it is I who display the beauty of God's Gentleness, I! (D 16533)

In this connection, the following anecdote from one of the oldest and most authoritative of Rūmī's biographies is worth quoting:

> One day we were in the garden of Ḥusām al-Dīn Chalabī with Mawlānā ("our master": Rūmī). He had put both his blessed feet in a brook and was speaking about the divine sciences. In the midst of his words he began praising the attributes of the king of the fakirs, Mawlānā Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī. Badr al-Dīn Walad the teacher, one of the greatest and most perfect of the disciples, sighed and said, "What a shame! What a loss!"
>
> Mawlānā said to him, "Why is it a loss? What shame is it? What is this loss all about? What caused it? What business has loss among us?"
>
> Badr al-Dīn became embarassed and looked at the ground. He said, "I was lamenting the fact that I never met Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī and never benefitted from his luminous presence. All my sorrow and regret arose from that."
>
> Mawlānā remained silent for a long moment. Then he said, "Even though you have not attained to the presence of Mawlānā Shams al-Dīn—may God magnify his

mention—by the holy spirit of my father, you have attained to someone from each of whose hairs dangle a hundred thousand Shams-i Tabrīzīs, each bewildered at the comprehension of the mystery of his mystery."[6]

After the disappearance of Shams, Rūmī did not continue with his preaching for the general public, but turned all his attention to the training of Sufi initiates. From this time to the end of his life in 672/1273 he continued his profuse outpouring of inspired poetry.

THE WORKS

Rūmī's major works are the *Dīwān-i Shams-i Tabrīzī* of some 40,000 verses and the *Mathnawī* of about 25,000 verses. In addition, three collections of his talks and letters have been preserved.

The *Dīwān* ("Collected Poems") comprises some 3,230 ghazals totalling 35,000 verses; 44 *tarjī'āt*, a type of poem composed of two or more ghazals, a total of 1,700 verses; and 2,000 *rubā'iyyāt* or "quatrains." The *Dīwān* contains all of Rūmī's poetry other than the *Mathnawī*. It spans a period of almost thirty years, from sometime after the arrival of Shams in Konya to Rūmī's death. This is an important point, for it is often forgotten that a certain portion of the *Dīwān* was composed concurrently with the *Mathnawī*, during the last twelve or fourteen years of Rūmī's life.

Although a third of the poems in the *Dīwān* are dedicated explicitly to Shams, most of them make no mention of any person, often ending with such phrases as "Be silent!"; and a few praise such figures as Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Zarkūb and Ḥusām al-Dīn Chalabī.[7] Like Rūmī himself, the former was originally a disciple of Burhān al-Dīn Tirmidhī, but later joined the circle of Rūmī's devotees. Chalabī was Rūmī's disciple and became the immediate cause of the composition of the *Mathnawī*. In the *Dīwān* both of these figures play a role similar to that of Shams: They are mirrors in which Rūmī contemplates the Divine Beloved.

The *Mathnawī* ("Couplets") comprises six books of poetry in a didactic style, ranging in length from 3,810 to 4,915 verses. Whereas the *Dīwān* contains Rūmī's individual ghazals and other miscellaneous poems arranged according to the rhyme scheme, the *Mathnawī* represents a single work which was composed in its present order.

The biographers state that Rūmī began the *Mathnawī* at the request of his favorite disciple, Ḥusām al-Dīn Chalabī, who had noticed that many of Rūmī's devotees spent a good deal of time reading the didactic poetry of Sanā'ī and 'Aṭṭār, the two great masters of this genre before Rūmī. Such works present Sufi teachings in a form readily accessible and easily memorized. They are much more suited to the warmth and fellowship of Sufi circles than the classical textbooks on

the same subjects, which are often written in dry and stilted language. Such poetry could be read and enjoyed by anyone with a command of the language and a certain amount of spiritual "taste" or intuition (*dhawq*), while the textbooks could only be studied by those with formal training in the religious sciences.

One day Chalabī suggested to Rūmī that he write a work in the didactic style of Sanā'ī and 'Aṭṭār to complement his other poetry. Rūmī immediately took a slip of paper out from his turban, upon which were written the first eighteen lines of the *Mathnawī*. From then on Rūmī and Chalabī met regularly. Rūmī would compose the poetry and Chalabī would write it down and then read it back to him. Their work began sometime around 658/1260 or 659/1261 and continued with certain delays until Rūmī's death. Since the sixth book of the work breaks off in the middle of a story, it seems that Rūmī died without completing it.

Like other long didactic Sufi poems before it, the *Mathnawī* is a rambling collection of anecdotes and tales derived from a great variety of sources, from the Koran to the folk humor of the day. Each story is told to illustrate some point, and its moral is discussed in great detail. The subject matter of the anecdotes and more particularly the digressions runs the whole gamut of Islamic wisdom, with particular emphasis upon the inward or Sufi interpretation.

Most of the individual poems of the *Dīwān* may be said to represent particular spiritual states or experiences, such as union with God or separation after union, described in appropriate images and symbols. Although the *Dīwān* contains many short didactic passages, on the whole it appears as a collection of individual and separate crystallizations and concretizations of spiritual states undergone on the path to God. The overall "feeling" of the *Dīwān* is one of spiritual intoxication and ecstatic love.

In contrast to the *Dīwān*, the *Mathnawī* is relatively sober. It represents a reasoned and measured attempt to explain the various dimensions of spiritual life and practice to disciples intent upon following the Way. More generally, it is aimed at anyone who has time to sit down and ponder the meaning of life and existence.

In a sense one could say that the *Dīwān* comprises so many flashes and gleams from the inward dimensions of Rūmī's spiritual life. Each poem is a symbolical image of a mystical state he has experienced on the path to God or after having attained to the Goal. But the *Mathnawī* is a commentary upon these mystical states and stations. It places them within the overall context of Islamic and Sufi teachings and practice. And it corrects the mistaken impression that one might receive by studying different poems in the *Dīwān* in isolation and separating them from the wider context of Sufism and Islam.

Very similar in style and content to the *Mathnawī* is the prose work *Fīhi mā fīhi* ("In it is what is in it"), also written during the last few years of Rūmī's life. This work in fact represents transcriptions of talks given by Rūmī to various disciples. Like the *Mathnawī*, it is very much a didactic work, explaining in detail and through a great variety of comparisons and analogies different dimensions of Sufi teachings.

A second prose work is *Majālis-i sab'ah* ("Seven Sessions"). This relatively short work comprises a number of sermons obviously delivered not to an audience comprised only of Sufis but to a larger public. The style and the fact that Rūmī does not quote any of his own poetry place it in the early period of his life, before the meeting with Shams. One of the greatest authorities on Rūmī holds that Rūmī delivered these sermons before the death of his father when he was in his early twenties.[8] If this is so, its contents illustrate the fact that he was thoroughly imbued with Sufi teachings from his youth. This supports the view that the role of Shams-i Tabrīzī was mainly that of exteriorizing his inward knowledge and spiritual states in the form of poetry.

Finally there are Rūmī's *Makātīb* or "Letters," 145 documents of an average length of one or two pages. Most of these are addressed to various princes and noblemen of Konya and in fact are letters of recommendation or requests for various favors written on behalf of disciples or friends. A small number are addressed to family members and disciples. For the most part these letters do not deal with Rūmī's spiritual teachings except in passing; the majority of passages that do throw light on his teachings have been translated here. In contrast to many collections of letters by Sufi masters, the *Makātīb* contain only one letter specifically addressed to someone who has asked for spiritual counsel (no. 68, partly translated in section II, B, 1).

THE TEACHINGS

Rūmī's voluminous works present a kaleidoscopic image of God, man, the world, and the interrelationship of these three realities. But in spite of the often bewildering complexity of the picture Rūmī paints, all his expositions and explanations are so infused with a common perfume and so harmonious that one can readily agree with those who say that they are all reducible to a single sentence or phrase. Although his teachings can probably never be totally encompassed by any systematic exposition, certainly all of them express a single reality, the overriding reality of Rūmī's existence and of Islam itself: "There is no god but God."

> How many words the world contains! But all have one meaning. When you smash the jugs, the water is one. (D 32108)

Rūmī never set out to write an organized textbook on Sufism or to give an exhaustive explanation of some or all of its teachings. Some of his contemporaries even objected to his unsystematic and anecdotal style, asking why there was no mention of "metaphysical discussions and sublime mysteries" (M III 4234). Many great Sufis of his day wrote erudite and systematic treatises on Sufi lore. But unlike them, Rūmī did not "describe and define each station and stage by which the mystic ascends to God" (M III 4236). Rūmī answers his detractors in a way that expresses clearly his own role as he perceived it:

> When the Koran was revealed, the unbelievers criticized it in the same way.
>
> They said, "It is only legends and contemptible tales. There is no profound investigation or lofty inquiry.
>
> Little children understand it. It is nothing but a few commands about what is approved and disapproved." (M III 4237–39)

In other words, "You may criticize my words if you like, but you should know that they are like God's own words: They are a message of salvation for mankind."

In many passages Rūmī states clearly that his aim is not primarily to explain but to guide. His purpose in composing poetry and in speaking to his listeners is not to give them a scientific or scholarly exposition of this or that point of the Islamic teachings. Nor is it to explain to them what Sufism, the inward dimension of Islam, is all about. He only wants to make them realize that as human beings, they are bound by their very nature to turn toward God and to devote themselves totally to Him.[9]

In fact, we can say about Rūmī what we can say about numerous other figures in the history of Islamic thought: he takes the principle of the "profession of God's Unity" (*tawḥīd*) as given and explains all that this principle implies for us as human beings in terms of our ideas, our activities, and our existence. But this simple statement cannot begin to tell us why Rūmī has attracted so much attention from his own lifetime down to the present day. That must be sought not so much in *what* he is saying but in *how* he says it. As soon as one separates Rūmī's message from his own mode of expressing it, it becomes somehow dry and uninspiring. This is a major drawback of books *about* Rūmī—by dissecting his poetry and thought, they lose

sight of his heart and soul. To appreciate Rūmī in all his dimensions, one must read Rūmī himself, not the scholarly commentators.

But the Western reader faces a number of obstacles to reading and understanding Rūmī's works. Leaving aside the well-known drawbacks of translations in general, there remain the constant references to Islamic teachings with which the reader may not be familiar. Rūmī's universe is shaped by the Koran, the Prophet, and the Moslem saints, just as Dante's is shaped by Christ, the Bible, and the church. But fortunately, Rūmī's message is so universal and he is so liberal in his use of imagery drawn from sources common to all human experience that this obstacle is not a fundamental one. It can be overcome by a careful selection of texts. As a result his essential teachings can be presented with a great richness of symbolism and imagery yet unencumbered by long explanations of obscure points, however useful such explanations may be in their proper place.

A second obstacle is more difficult to overcome than the first: A thorough understanding of almost any passage in Rūmī's works presupposes an acquaintance with the whole body of his teachings. Rūmī makes no attempt to begin simply and then gradually to lead the reader by stages into the profundities of Sufi teachings. His *Dīwān* precludes such a procedure by its very nature. But even the *Mathnawī*, which from the beginning was a didactic work and which preserves its original form, makes no attempt to arrange material in terms of degrees of difficulty or complexity. From the first line Rūmī alludes to a whole range of Sufi theory and practice.

In addition, Rūmī's teachings are interrelated in innumerable ways. Practically every line of his poetry could act as the starting point for an exposition of the whole body of his teachings. When Rūmī's poetry is taught in traditional circles in the Islamic world, it is not uncommon for a master to spend months on a short anecdote from the *Mathnawī* or a single ghazal from the *Dīwān*. By the end of a few years' study, the student may find that he has read only a small percentage of Rūmī's verses. But having studied these verses thoroughly, he will be familiar with the whole range of Rūmī's spiritual teachings and be able to read the rest of his poetry with sufficient understanding to do without a master. Not, of course, that he will necessarily have become a master of Rūmī's verse himself. As every student of Rūmī knows, his verses are an inexhaustible ocean, and ultimately the student's understanding will depend upon his own capacity.

> If you pour the ocean into a jug, how much will it hold? One day's store. (M I 20)

> The window determines how much light enters the house, even if the moon's radiance fills the east and the west. (D 9911)

In short, a thorough understanding of any one of Rūmī's teachings entails some degree of understanding of them all. The reader can only benefit from Rūmī's poetry to the extent that he is already familiar with the teachings it contains—or, one should add, to the extent his spirit recalls and "recollects" them. So a major purpose of the present book is to outline and explain briefly, to the extent possible in Rūmī's own words, the central themes of his works.

THREE DIMENSIONS OF SUFISM

Sufi teachings can be divided into three broad categories. The first two categories may be referred to as "wisdom" and "method," or in terms more commonly used in the context of Islam, "knowledge" (*'ilm*) and "works" (*'amal*), i.e., "theory" and "practice." According to the Prophet, "Knowledge without works is like a tree without fruit." Here of course "knowledge" is the same thing the Prophet has referred to in many other sayings, such as, "The search for knowledge is encumbent upon every Moslem"; "Seek knowledge, even unto China"; "Knowledge is a light which God causes to descend into the heart of whomsoever He will." It is the knowledge of God Himself and of man's ultimate end. For Moslems, it is the knowledge revealed by the Koran. In such a perspective "works" means the application of this knowledge to one's everyday life. For Moslems it is the practice of Islam.

Within the context of this Islamic conception of knowledge and works, the Sufis emphasize a third element that is not set down so explicitly in the Koran and the Hadith: spiritual realization, or the ascending stages of human perfection resulting in proximity to God. Again the Sufis cite a saying of the Prophet: "The Law is my words, the Way is my works, and the Truth is my inward states." Here the Sufis understand "Law" or Sharī'ah in its widest sense, as embracing "knowledge" and all the theoretical teachings of Islam. The "Way" or Ṭarīqah is then the method of putting the Law into practice. And the Reality or Ḥaqīqah is the inward states and stations attained by the traveler in his journey to God and in God.

> The Law is like a lamp: It shows the way. Without a lamp, you will not be able to go forward. When you enter the path, your going is the Way. And when you reach the goal, that is the Truth.

> The Law may be compared to learning the theory of medicine. The Way involves avoiding certain foods and consuming certain remedies on the basis of this theory. Then the Truth is to find everlasting health and to have no more need for theory and practice.
>
> When man dies to the life of this world, the Law and the Way will be cut off from him, and only the Truth will remain. . . . The Law is knowledge, the Way is works and the Truth is attainment to God. (M V introd.)

These then are the three dimensions of Sufi teaching: the Law, the Way, and the Truth; or knowledge, works, and attainment to God; or theory, practice, and spiritual realization.

Knowledge of God, man, and the world derives ultimately from God Himself, primarily by means of revelation, i.e.—in the context of Islam—the Koran and the Hadith of the Prophet; and secondarily by means of inspiration or "unveiling," i.e., the spiritual vision of the saints, or the realized Sufis. Knowledge provides the illumination whereby man can see everything in its proper place.

Thus "knowledge," or the theoretical dimension of religion, which becomes codified in the form of the Divine Law, situates man in the total universe, defining his nature and responsibilities as a human being. Knowledge and theory find their complementary dimension in practice, or the Way, which is determined by the "works" or Sunnah of the Prophet, the norm for all God-directed human activity. To follow the Sufi path is to obey the commands and prohibitions of God according to the model provided by His Prophet: "You have a good example in God's Messenger, for whosoever hopes for God and the last day, and remembers God often" (Koran XXXIII 21). "Say (oh Muḥammad)! 'If you love God, follow me, and God will love you and forgive you your sins'" (III 31). More specifically the Sufi Way is to follow the model provided by the Prophet's representatives on earth, the saints, who are the *shaykhs* or the spiritual masters.

Once having entered the Way, the disciple begins to undergo a process of inward transformation. If he is among those destined to reach spiritual perfection, he will climb the ascending rungs of a ladder stretching to heaven and beyond; the alchemy of the Way will transmute the base copper of his substance into pure and noble gold. The Truth or "attainment to God" is not a simple, one-step process. It can be said that this third dimension of Sufi teaching deals with all the inner experiences undergone by the traveler on his journey. It concerns all the "virtues" (*akhlāq*) the Sufi must acquire, in keeping with the Prophet's saying, "Assume the virtues of God!" If acquiring virtues means "attaining to God," this is because they do not belong to man. The discipline of the Way coupled with God's grace and

guidance results in a process of purification whereby the veil of human nature is gradually removed from the mirror of the primordial human substance, made in the image of God, or, in the Prophet's words, "upon the Form of the All-Merciful." Any perfection achieved by man is God's perfection reflected within him.

In the classical textbooks, this third dimension of Sufi teachings is discussed mainly under the heading of the "stations" (*maqāmāt*) and the "spiritual states" (*aḥwāl*). From a certain point of view we can call this dimension "Sufi psychology"—as long as we understand the term "psyche" in the widest possible sense, as equivalent to "spirit" in Rūmī's terminology. Sufi psychology could then be defined as "the science of the transformations undergone by the spirit in its journey to God." One must remember, however, that this science bears no resemblance to "psychology" as known in the West today. For in Rūmī's terminology, modern psychology is based totally upon the ego's study of itself. But the "ego" (*nafs*) is the lowest dimension of man's inward existence, his animal and satanic nature. Only God or the spirit can know the spirit, which is man's higher or angelic nature. Ultimately the ego cannot even know itself without a totally distorted viewpoint, for it gains all of its positive reality from the spirit that lies above and beyond it. Only the spirit that encompasses and embraces the ego can know the ego. And only the saints have attained to the station whereby their consciousness of reality is centered within their spirits or in God.

In Sufi psychology, the "stations" are said to be the spiritual and moral perfections, or the "virtues," achieved by the traveler on the path to God. For example, once having actualized wakefulness, the traveler moves on to repentence and then to self-examination; or once having achieved humility, he ascends to chivalry and then to expansion. A work such as Anṣārī's *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, from which these examples are taken, classifies the ascending stations in ten sections according to one hundred different headings.[10] Other Sufis have employed totally different schemes and classified the stations in a greater or lesser number of headings. But the general idea of all the classifications is the same: an ascending ladder of spiritual perfections that man must climb.

As for the "states," they are usually said to consist of spiritual graces bestowed directly by God and outside of man's power of acquisition. Unlike the stations, the states are not seen as moving in an ascending hierarchy, but rather as coming and going as God wills.

However this may be, Rūmī does not discuss the "stations and states" explicitly or as such. But he does discuss the inward spiritual experiences the traveler undergoes in great detail, as well as the attitudes and mental states man must try to achieve. As indicated

earlier, numerous poems in the *Dīwān* may be viewed as poetical expressions of specific spiritual states and experiences.

In short, Rūmī provides a detailed elucidation of Sufi psychology, but not in terms of the systematic schemes found in the classical textbooks. Hence the student of his works must himself provide a framework within which these teachings can be discussed.

THE PLAN OF THE BOOK

The present work has been divided into three parts according to the scheme just discussed: knowledge or theory, works or practice, and attainment to God or "spiritual psychology." Rūmī provides the basis for this division in the passage quoted above, but I do not claim that the overall scheme is anything but my own imperfect understanding and rearrangement of Rūmī's teachings. Without doubt, numerous other schemes could be envisaged. In any case, one would still have to agree with those who say that Rūmī himself did not present his teachings as a "system," and that to systematize them is to run the risk of misrepresenting them. Certainly anyone who claims to explain and comment upon Rūmī's teachings needs to forewarn the reader of the difficulties involved in such an undertaking and to call to his attention the famous line at the beginning of the *Mathnawī*:

> Everyone has become my friend in accordance with his own opinion. He has not sought out my mysteries from within me. (M I 6)

It would have been possible to systematize and arrange Rūmī's ideas within the present outline much more thoroughly than has been attempted in the present work. However, this would have defeated my goal of allowing Rūmī to present his teachings in his own words. The more one analyzes his works, the more they appear as a "philosophy" or perhaps as an assemblage of ideas relevant only to the history of thought, rather than as the living spiritual message he intended them to be.

As far as possible, I have attempted to maintain Rūmī's own words and means of expression. My own remarks are meant only as an introduction to what Rūmī wants to say, not as an exhaustive explanation of his teachings. The reader will often meet with certain inconsistencies in the passages quoted, or he may see that Rūmī is employing a term in a meaning other than that which I have discussed in my introductory notes. Although one could clarify these inconsistencies and usages through a more thorough exposition of the theoretical basis of Sufi teachings, this might result in moving too far from the flavor of the original passages and from my stated aim of letting

Rūmī speak for himself. In any case, these inconsistencies reflect the original text, and one could say that in the original there is something providential about them. At the very least they remind the reader that any theoretical and literal explanation of Rūmī's teachings can never suffice. If the reader really wants to know what Rūmī is talking about, he must follow his advice and pass into the "meaning" beyond the outward form of his teachings.

> Dissolve this headstrong form with spiritual travail! Beneath it you will find Oneness like a treasure! (M I 683)

THE TRANSLATIONS

I need to say a word about my method of translating the selections from Rūmī's works. The efforts of R. A. Nicholson and A. J. Arberry have made Rūmī one of the most translated figures of Islamic literature and thought. Nicholson's monumental edition and translation of the *Mathnawī*, along with his two volume commentary, published over a period of sixteen years, have put all students of Rūmī forever in his debt. His translation of fifty poems from the *Dīwān* for many years was the only serious study of this work in English. Arberry's translations of *Fīhi mā fīhi*, 400 ghazals, and a selection of the *rubā'iyyāt*, have further added to the wealth of original sources available in English. Both of these scholars were extremely dedicated to accurate renderings of the original Persian.[11] Nicholson's translations in particular are on the whole so exact that his text corresponds to the original practically word for word. His fidelity is such that even additions to the text which are clearly understood in Persian and necessary for grammatical renderings in English are usually marked off by parentheses.

In my own translations I have kept nearer to Arberry's method in that I have avoided parentheses and other unnecessary awkwardnesses in an attempt to produce readable English. Often, however, I have gone farther than Arberry goes in his literal and prose translations, since I am more inclined to provide equivalent idiomatic expressions instead of an exact translation; and often I add explanations in the form of one or two words or a phrase in order to avoid the necessity for a footnote. Nevertheless, the translations are all faithful representations of the original. All passages also translated by Nicholson or Arberry have been carefully collated with their versions, and I am satisfied that my own renderings are equally or more accurate (see the Appendix).

It also needs to be pointed out that the present translation possesses one characteristic not found in the work of Nicholson and

Arberry: It maintains consistency in the rendering of certain important technical terms. One can conclude from a study of Nicholson's work—and his student Arberry followed him in this regard—that he felt that certain terms can best be translated in different ways according to the context. In many cases one would certainly agree, but there are a few terms which play a key and central role in Rūmī's thought. Even though they may seem to denote different meanings in different contexts, when they are translated differently an important and even fundamental thread of consistency running throughout Rūmī's works is lost. My own opinion is that it is better to maintain a single technical term in English and to clarify the range of meanings it embraces through definition and demonstrating how it is employed in different contexts.

The most salient example of this type of technical term is the word *ma'nā* ("meaning") as oposed to *ṣūrat* ("form"). The interplay between these two terms plays a primary role in Rūmī's teachings, as I have tried to demonstrate in the present work. But in the translations of Nicholson and Arberry the relationship between the two terms is completely lost because of inconsistent renderings of the word *ma'nā*.[12]

I should emphasise that I do not wish to criticize either Nicholson or Arberry in this regard. The service they have rendered to the study of Rūmī is unparalleled; in particular, no one today can pretend to write about Rūmī in English—or read the *Mathnawī* in Persian—without acknowledging a great debt to Nicholson. Nevertheless, there is always room for improvement on the efforts of earlier scholars, especially when one has in view the study of a particular dimension of Rūmī's works as distinguished from other dimensions.

My liberal use of capitalized letters may call for a note of explanation. In general I employ capitals where they might not be expected because there are certain nuances in meaning that otherwise might be missed. More particularly, I use them for any Name or Attribute of God, whether theological or poetical. Thus, for example, God is the Merciful, the Living, and the King and He possesses Power, but He is also the Friend, the Hidden Treasure, the Painter, the Moon, the Ocean, the Solomon of Subsistence, the Heart-ravisher, and even, on occasion, the Butcher and the Warehouse. The same words in other contexts may not refer to God and therefore low case letters are employed. Pronouns referring to God are also capitalized. I also employ capital letters for certain Islamic and Sufi terms to indicate that they are being used in a technical sense or are virtually proper nouns. Thus, as is usual on works on Islam, terms like Name and Attribute are capitalized when referring to the Names and Attributes of God. Other examples include the Companions (of the Prophet Muhammad), the Straight Path (= Islam or Sufism), the Way (= Sufism), Time (= the whole cycle of time and existence), the Fish (= the mythical being

that upholds the earth), the Pen (= the Supreme Pen through which God created the universe), and the Throne (of God = the ninth heaven). Finally, I employ capitals for certain Sufi terms of special significance that might not otherwise be recognized; for example, the Spirit and the Eye (= the organs of mystical vision), the Possessors of Vision (= the saints), Men (= saints, spiritual warriors), the Pole (= the greatest saint of the age who maintains the universe), and the Language of the Birds (= the speech of sanctified human spirits). If I have sometimes been inconsistent, this was perhaps inevitable, for, among other things, I was constantly faced with the problem of where to draw the line between the created and the Uncreated, a line that Rūmī himself will draw at different levels according to the particular point of view in question. I beg the indulgence of those readers sensitive to such inconsistencies.

There remains the method employed in selecting passages for translation. Readers familiar with Rūmī's works may well wonder why I have made certain choices and not others, since many other passages could have illustrated my point equally well or better. In this respect I have been guided by two considerations. First, to a certain degree I have tried to avoid passages already translated. This meant choosing fewer selections from the *Mathnawī* and *Fīhi mā fīhi* than might be expected and ignoring many of the finest ghazals in the *Dīwān*. But since Nicholson and Arberry translated only about ten percent of the *Dīwān*, the untranslated portions have remained an untapped treasury of Sufi lore which I have attempted to make full use of.[13] Second, the present book was originally undertaken as an introduction to a representative anthology of Rūmī's works now in progress. It is still meant to complement that volume. Hence I have avoided all the material tentatively selected for that anthology, including some three hundred choice ghazals.

William C. Chittick
Woodbury, Connecticut
7 August 1981

Part I

THEORY

A.

Seeing Things As They Are

1. FORM AND MEANING

Rūmī has nothing but pity and disdain for those who look at the world around and within themselves and do not understand that what they are seeing is a veil over reality. The world is a dream, a prison, a trap, foam thrown up from the ocean, dust kicked up by a passing horse. But it is not what it appears to be.

> If everything that appears to us were just as it appears, the Prophet, who was endowed with such penetrating vision, both illuminated and illuminating, would never have cried out, "Oh Lord, show us things as they are!" (F 5/18)

Rūmī draws a fundamental distinction between "form" (*ṣūrat*) and "meaning" (*ma'nā*).[1] Form is a thing's outward appearance, meaning its inward and unseen reality. Ultimately, meaning is that thing as it is known to God Himself. And since God is beyond any sort of multiplicity, in the last analysis the meaning of all things is God. "Form is shadow, meaning the Sun." (M VI 4747)

> In face of meaning, what is form? Very contemptible. The meaning of the heavens keeps them in place. . . .
>
> The meaning of the wind makes it wander like a millwheel, captive to the water of the stream. (M I 3330, 33)

> Know that the outward form passes away, but the World of Meaning remains forever.
>
> How long will you make love with the shape of the jug? Leave aside the jug's shape: Go, seek water!
>
> Having seen the form, you are unaware of the meaning. If you are wise, pick out the pearl from the shell. (M II 1020–22)

The world then is form, or a collection of a myriad forms. By its very nature each form displays its own meaning, which is its reality with God. It is man's task not to be deceived by the form. He must understand that form does not exist for its own sake, but manifests a meaning above and beyond itself.

> Forms are the oil, meaning the light—otherwise, you would not keep asking why.
>
> If form is for the sake of the form itself, then why ask "Why?" . . .
>
> So wisdom cannot allow that the outward forms of the heavens and the inhabitants of the earth should exist for this only. (M IV 2994–95, 98)
>
> Pass beyond form, escape from names! Flee titles and names toward meaning! (M IV 1285)
>
> The Prophet said, "Behold the form of the heavens and the earth, and through this form draw benefit from that Universal Meaning. For you see the changes wrought by the Wheel of Heaven, the rains of the clouds in season, summer and winter, and the changes of Time. You see that everything is in its place and in accordance with wisdom. After all, how does this inanimate cloud know that it must send down rain in season? You see the earth, how it nurtures plants and makes one into ten. Well, Someone does this. See Him by means of this world, and take replenishment from Him. Just as you take replenishment from the meaning of the human reality through the body, take replenishment from the meaning of the world through the world's form." (F 39/51)

The dichotomy between meaning and form is a mainstay of Rūmī's teachings and must be kept constantly in mind. He refers to it in many different contexts and through a great variety of images and symbols. In fact, there is no overriding reason to label the fundamental dichotomy within reality as that between "form and meaning," except that this pair of terms seems to be the widest in application of all the pairs Rūmī employs, and he probably refers to it more often than any other. In any case, we should not attempt to tie Rūmī down too closely

in the matter of terminology. "Meaning" by definition is beyond form and its constrictions. Therefore all attempts to express it in words must be equivocal to some extent. Rather than impose strict philosophical definitions on Rūmī's terminology, we will be much better off letting him speak for himself as he urges the reader to go beyond definitions and the limitations of human language.

Rūmī often discusses the meaning-form dichotomy in terms drawn from philosophical usage, and even more often in the images and symbols of poetry. A few of the terms he pairs together most commonly are secondary causes (*asbāb*) and First Cause (*musabbib*), outward (*ẓāhir*) and inward (*bāṭin*), dust and wind, foam and ocean, picture and painter, shadow and light.

> People look at secondary causes and think that they are the origin of everything that happens. But it has been revealed to the saints that secondary causes are no more than a veil. (F 68/80)
>
> These secondary causes are veils upon the eyes, for not every eye is worthy of seeing His craftsmanship.
>
> One must have an eye which cuts through secondary causes and tears aside all veils,
>
> To the end that it may see the First Cause in No-place and know that exertion, earnings, and shops are nonsense.
>
> Every good and evil arrives from the First Cause. Oh father, secondary causes and means are naught
>
> But a phantom materialized upon the highway, so that the period of heedlessness may endure sometime longer. (M V 1551–55)
>
> Whoever looks upon secondary causes is for certain a form-worshiper. Whoever looks upon the First Cause has become a light which discerns Meaning. (D 25048)
>
> The earth has the external shape of dust, but inside are the luminous Attributes of God.
>
> Its outward has fallen into war with its inward; its inward is like a pearl and its outward a stone.
>
> Its outward says, "I am this and no more." Its inward says, "Look well, before and behind!"
>
> Its outward denies, saying, "The inward is nothing." The inward says, "We will show you. Wait!" (M IV 1007–10)
>
> The unbeliever's argument is only this: "I see no home but this outward."
>
> He never reflects that every outward gives news of a hidden wisdom.

Indeed, the profit of every outward thing lies hidden in the inward, like the benefits within medicine. (M IV 2878–80)

Seize upon the outward, even if it flies crookedly! In the end, the outward leads to the inward. (M III 526)

He has stirred up a world like dust: hidden in the dust, He is like the wind. (D 28600)

The world is dust, and within the dust the sweeper and broom are hidden. (D 13164)

Existence is all dust, its luminosity coming from that Moon: Turn not your back toward the Moon, follow not the dust! (D 12236)

Day and night, the Sea keeps on churning the foam. You behold the foam but not the Sea—how strange! (M III 1271)

How should the foamlike shape move without waves? How can dust rise to the zenith without wind?

Since you have seen the dust of the shape, see the Wind! Since you have seen the foam, see the Ocean of Creative Power! (M VI 1459–60)

The world's forms are foam upon the Sea. If you are a man of purity, pass beyond the foam! (D 28722)

His Beauty is the sun, His veil the world: But what does the picture see other than pictures and designs? (D 706)

They play the flute, tambourine, and harp for an ear: This picture-world points toward a Painter. (D 9312)

Dear one, look at the Painter! Why do you stare at the pictures on the bathhouse wall? Look at the sun and the moon! Why do you gaze at the moon-faced girls? (D 24342)

Before the Painter and brush, the picture is helpless and shackled like a child in the womb. (M I 611)

The picture derives its movements only from the Painter's brush, the compass' foot revolves around its point. (D 10955)

Light is the First Cause, and every secondary cause is its shadow. (D 525)

Thou art the Sun, and all things follow Thee like shadows, sometimes to the left, sometimes to the right. (D 21966)

We are all darkness and God is light; this house receives its brightness from the Sun.

The light here is mixed with shadow—if you want light, come out of the house onto the roof. (D 30842–43)

2. EXISTENCE AND NONEXISTENCE

In referring to form and meaning or the outward and the inward, Rūmī employs another set of terms which emphasizes the "negative" face of meaning in relation to the "positive" side of form. From this point of view form is "place" and meaning is "No-place"; foam is "color" and the sea is "Colorlessness." For meaning is opposite to form and can only be attained by form's negation, by "formlessness."

> Everyone has turned his face toward some direction, but the saints have turned in the direction without directions. (M V 350)
>
> In the direction without directions all is spring; any other direction holds nothing but the cold of December. (D 20089)
>
> He appears to be still and in movement, but He is neither this nor that; He manifests Himself in place, but in truth He has no place. (D 6110)
>
> You are from place, but your origin is No-place: Close down this shop and open up that shop! (M II 612)
>
> How long will you give signs? Silence! For that Origin of signs has no sign. (D 7268)
>
> Colorlessness is the root of all colors, peace the root of all wars. (M VI 59)
>
> Colorlessness is the root of colors, picturelessness the root of pictures, wordlessness the root of words and the mine the root of coins—so behold! (D 13925)
>
> Thousands of colors have come from the Vat, which transcends blue and white. (D 28249)
>
> Form comes into existence from the Formless, just as smoke is born from fire. (M VI 3712)
>
> Lord of lords! Formless Giver of forms! What form art Thou pulling over me? Thou knowest, I know not. (D 14964)

Rūmī often discerns between form and meaning in terms of "existence" (*hastī*, *wujūd*) and "nonexistence" (*nīstī*, *'adam*). This pairing of terms is more complicated than many others, since each of the two words may refer either to form or to meaning, depending upon the context. From one point of view, we see this world as an existent thing. Hence form is existence, while meaning is formless and nonexistent. But if we look carefully, we see that this form or "existence"

is but dust upon the wind. Compared to the ocean, the foam may truly be called "nonexistent." So from a second point of view, God and meaning are existence, while form and the world are nonexistence. Rūmī often contrasts these two points of view in the same verses, and at other times he refers to one point of view or the other.

> This world of nonexistence appears as existent things, and that world of Existence is exceedingly hidden.
> Dust is upon the wind, playing—deceptive, it sets up a veil.
> That which is doing the work has no work; it is only skin. But that which is hidden is the kernel and origin. (M II 1280-82)
> We and our existences are nonexistences. Thou art Absolute Existence showing Thyself as perishable things.
> We are all lions, but lions on a banner: We keep on leaping because of the wind. (M I 602–603)
> The worldly man imagines that a nonexistent thing possesses splendor. Oh friend, why would a wise man devote his life to the work of nonexistence? . . .
> Because of the darkness in your eyes, you imagine that a nothing is a something. Your eyes can be made healthy and illumined with the dust of the King's doorstep! (D 11470, 75)

3. THE ILLUSION OF DICHOTOMY

Form and meaning are inextricably connected: form derives from meaning, and meaning manifests itself as form. Since the two are the outward and inward aspects of a single reality, each is important in its own way. But for most people, the danger lies in giving too much importance to form and not understanding that it derives its existence and significance from meaning.

> Each and every part of the world is a snare for the fool and a means of deliverance for the wise. (M VI 4287)
> I said to the white-haired world, "You are both snare and admonition." It replied, "Although I am an ancient master, yet I am still His young disciple." (D 14988)
> Form also has tremendous importance. No, much more than importance, for it participates in the kernel. Just as nothing can be done without the kernel, so also nothing can be done without the shell . . . But the root is meaning. (F 19/31)

When you say that "form is the branch of meaning," or "form is the vassal, while the heart is the king"—after all, form and meaning are relative terms. You say, "This is the branch of that": If there were no branch, how could you call the other the "root"? So it became the root because of the branch. If there were no branch, it would have no name. (F 144/153)

4. "THE SCIENCE OF RELIGIONS"

Just as Rūmī constantly distinguishes between form and meaning, he also refers over and over again to two kinds of knowledge and vision: one that discerns only form, and another that passes beyond form and discerns the meaning. The first he sometimes calls the "science of bodies" (*'ilm-i abdān*) to distinguish it from the "science of religions" (*'ilm-i adyān*); the former embraces all that we customarily understand by the term "science" and "knowledge," even such disciplines as theology and metaphysics, for these are learned by rote and study. Until they boil up from the heart as the result of a direct vision of the inward meanings and realities, or of God Himself, they are but shadows, not light. Without a direct and vibrantly living vision of meaning, knowledge is only form. Certainly it may have the potentiality of being transmuted into true knowledge, but only after long spiritual travail.

The man more perfect in erudition is behind in meaning and ahead in form . . . .

A knowledge is needed whose root is upon the other side, since every branch leads to its root.

Every wing cannot fly across the breadth of the ocean: Only a knowledge that comes directly from Him can take one to Him. (M III 1117, 24–25)

Every science acquired by study and effort in this world is the "science of bodies." But the science acquired after death is the "science of religions." Knowing the science of "I am God" is the science of bodies, but becoming "I am God" is the science of religions.[2] To see the light of a lamp or a fire is the science of bodies, but to be consumed by the fire of the light or the lamp is the science of religions. Whatever is vision is the science of religions, whatever is knowledge is the science of bodies. (F 228/235)

These people who have studied or are now studying imagine that if they attend faithfully here they will forget and abandon all their knowledge. On the contrary, when they come here their sciences all acquire a spirit. The sciences

are all paintings. When they gain spirits, it is as if a lifeless body receives a spirit. The root of all these sciences is from Yonder, but they have been transported from the world without sounds and letters into the world of sounds and letters. (F 156/163–164)

B.

Spirit, Heart, and Intellect

1. THE SPIRIT

The outward form of the world and of everything within it manifests a hidden meaning. The human form is no exception.

> First they make or buy a tent, then they bring the Turcoman as a guest.
>
> Know that your form is the tent and your meaning is the Turcoman: Your meaning is the captain and your form is the ship. (M III 529–530)
>
> If man were human through his form, Muḥammad and Abū Jahl[3] would be the same.
>
> The painting on the wall is the likeness of a man. Look at that form. What does it lack?
>
> That splendid painting lacks a spirit. Go, seek that precious pearl! (M I 1019–21)

In an oft-quoted verse the Koran says, "They will ask you (Oh Muḥammad!) about the spirit. Say: 'The spirit is from the command of my Lord; and of knowledge you have been given but a little.'" (XVII 85)

> It is understood from *Say: "The spirit is from the command of my Lord"*[4] that the spirit's explanation cannot be uttered by the tongue. (D 21284)
>
> God possesses nothing in the lofty heavens and in the earth more hidden than man's spirit.

God has disclosed all things, fresh and withered (cf. Koran VI 59), but He has sealed the spirit's mysteries with *from the command of my Lord.* (M VI 2877–78)

Since the spirit is *from the command of my Lord*, it is concealed. Whatever analogy I utter is contradicted. (M VI 3310)

In spite of such protestations, Rūmī has a great deal to say about this ineffable meaning hidden within man's form. For certainly he does not deny the possibility of knowing the spirit. God Himself, after all, is not beyond the spiritual perception of the saints. But he does want to point out that until man has himself passed beyond form and entered into meaning, he will not be able to grasp the spirit's true nature. Whatever one expresses in words has a tentative and ambiguous character. It should not be taken as a strict definition of something that in fact cannot be defined. It is only a pointer toward a reality beyond all forms and outward expressions.

Rūmī usually discusses the spirit from the point of view of its relation to other realities. His innumerable references to the spirit's connection to the body throw a good deal of light on the nature of both. As Rūmī is fond of pointing out, "Things become clear through their opposites." Just as the nature of meaning becomes clear when it is contrasted with form, so the nature of the spirit is clarified when it is contrasted with the body.

The body moves by means of the spirit, but you do not see the spirit: Know the spirit through the body's movement! (M IV 155)

The poor body will not move until the spirit moves: Until the horse goes forward, the saddlebag stands still. (D 14355)

Know that spirits are the ocean, bodies the foam. (D 33178)

The spirit is like a falcon, the body its fetter—the poor foot-bound, broken-winged creature! (M V 2280)

Have not the earthen clods—the bodies—come to life through the radiance of the spirit? Marvellous shining light! Wonderful life-increasing sun! (D 35280)

This world is the ocean, the body a whale, and the spirit Jonah, veiled from the light of dawn. (M II 3140)

The body keeps on boasting of loveliness and beauty, while the spirit has hidden its splendor and wings and plumes.

> The spirit says to it, "Oh dunghill! Who are you? You have lived for a day or two from my radiance." (M I 3267–68)
>
> Look not at the body's face, which rots and decays. Look at the spirit's face—may it ever stay fair and lovely! (D 1893)
>
> In its knowledge the spirit is a mountain, in its attributes the body a straw. Who has ever seen a mountain dangling from a straw? (D 24161)
>
> Within the egg of the body you are a marvellous bird—since you are inside the egg; you cannot fly.
>
> If the body's shell should break, you will flap your wings and win the spirit. (D 33567–68)
>
> Oh man! This body keeps you in torment. The bird of your spirit is imprisoned with a bird of another kind.
>
> The spirit is a falcon, but bodily dispositions are crows. The falcon has received many wounds from crows and owls. (M V 842–843)
>
> When will the bird of my spirit fly from the cage toward the garden? (D 33887)
>
> The only thing that will keep a caged bird from trying to escape is ignorance. (M I 1541)

So man's meaning or reality is his spirit, while his body or form is a prison from which he must escape. But again, one must not fall into the error of seeing a fundamental duality or dichotomy, since both body and spirit are necessary and good. The body in fact is only the outward manifestation of the spirit within the world. This is why Rūmī can refer to the body's "becoming spirit": The body of the saints becomes reintegrated into its spiritual source.

> Oh you who have drawn nourishment from the heavens and the earth until your body has grown fat, . . .
>
> Cleave to the spirit! These other things are vain.
>
> I call them "vain" in relation to the spirit, not in relation to the masterly work of their Creator. (M VI 3592, 94–95)
>
> The spirit cannot function without the body, and the body without the spirit is withered and cold.
>
> Your body is manifest and your spirit hidden: These two put all the business of the world in order. (M V 3423–24)
>
> God made the body the locus of manifestation for the spirit. (M VI 2208)

> So the saints have not said this lightly: The bodies of the purified ones become untainted, exactly like the spirit.
>
> Their words, their psyche, their outward form—all become absolute spirit without trace. (M I 2000–01)
>
> Thou wilt find nothing deader than my body. Give it life with the Light of Thy Essence! Let it become all spirit—this body of mine that sacrifices its life for Thee! (D 19229)

2. THE LEVELS OF THE SPIRIT

The opposition between body and spirit is hardly as simple and straightforward as it first might appear. We have seen that meaning has more than one level, and that only in the final analysis can it be identified with God Himself. Thus the intermediate levels of meaning are elevated and "subtle" (*laṭīf*) in relation to forms and bodies, but "gross" (*kathīf*) in relation to God.

> Just as these bodies are gross in relation to the meanings of people, so in relation to God's subtlety these ineffable and subtle meanings are gross bodies and forms. (F 99/110–111)

In a similar way, spirit can be divided into a number of levels, the lower of which appear as form and body in relation to the higher. Rūmī delineates four fundamental levels: the animal spirit, the human spirit, the angelic spirit or spirit of Gabriel, and the Muhammadan spirit or spirit of the saints. Above the last of these levels stands God, who transcends the spirit, but who is often referred to as "Spirit" metaphorically.[5]

The animal, natural, or fiery spirit is common to both men and animals and is precisely what makes them "animate." Hence the Persian word for "spirit", *jān*, is often used to mean life, in Rūmī's works as elsewhere; in fact the two concepts are practically inseparable in traditional Islamic thought. In many verses translated in the present work "life" would render the word *jān* as well as or better than spirit, but the latter term has been kept for the sake of consistency. If the close connection between the concepts of life and spirit is kept in mind, the sense of these verses will be clearer.

The animal spirit comes into existence with the body and like the body comes to an end. It is characterized by multiplicity and dispersion, in contrast to the higher levels of spirit, which all partake of unity. Its food is "water and clay," since it is so attached to the body as to be almost indistinguishable from it. The animal spirit is

related to the next level of spirit as form to meaning, or husk to kernel.

> The qualities of the body, like the body itself, are borrowed—set not your heart upon them, for they last but an hour!
> The qualities of the natural spirit also undergo annihilation, so seek the qualities of that spirit which is above the heavens. (M IV 1840–41)
> Wonderful! Are you not ashamed, oh brother, of a spirit in need of bread? (D 28664)
> Multiplicity lies in the animal spirit. The "Single Soul"[6] is the human spirit. (M II 188)

The next three levels of the spirit are more difficult to separate, for they all partake of unity and from a certain point of view are one and the same. Nevertheless, it can be said that the human spirit is that dimension of man's reality that distinguishes him from the animals, i.e., his faculty of articulated thought and self-awareness. An outstanding attribute of this spirit is discernment; and in respect of the fact that the spirit is able to discern truth from error, good from evil, the absolute from the relative, beauty from ugliness and so on, it is called the "intellect" (*'aql*). But the human spirit in its fullness can only be actualized through traversing the spiritual path. Hence only the saints have a true awareness of it, while the consciousness of other people is dominated by the animal spirit. This point will be discussed in detail in later chapters.

Once it is actualized in its fullness, the human spirit may be said to be nothing but the spirit of sanctity. So when Rūmī distinguishes among the three higher levels of the spirit, his purpose is usually to point out that there are different levels of self-realized beings, of saints and prophets; and that the highest levels man may attain are even beyond the spiritual degrees of the angels.

When Rūmī says, "Seek the spirit!", he means, "Transcend your animal nature and become united with the spiritual world!" He rarely specifies which of the three higher levels of spirit he has in mind.

> Experience shows that the spirit is nothing but awareness. Whoever has greater awareness has a greater spirit.
> Our spirit is greater than the animal spirit. Why? Because it has more awareness.
> Then the angel's spirit is greater than ours, for he transcends the rational senses.
> Then the spirit of the saints, the Possessors of Hearts, is even greater. Leave aside your astonishment!

That is why the angels prostrated themselves before Adam (Koran II 34): his spirit was greater than their existence.

After all, it would not have been proper to command a superior being to prostrate himself to an inferior one.

How could God's Justice and Kindness allow a rose to prostrate itself before a thorn?

When the spirit becomes greater and passes beyond all bounds, the spirits of all things become obedient to it. (M II 3326–33)

Oh worthless peoples, grasp bread, bread! Oh fortunate peoples, seize spirit, spirit!

The animal draws fodder to itself, it knows nothing else. Man seeks agates and coral.

Those gardens have slept, but these have blossomed and gained as their portion the Sultan's court.

There are immature spirits slithering into snares, and spirits that have flown up and found the way to the Beloved.

There is a spirit beyond description, above the turning heavens: nimble, subtle and well-proportioned, like the moon in Libra,

And another spirit like fire, harsh, headstrong and obstinate, short-lived and unhappy, like Satan's imagination.

Oh friend! Which are you? Are you ripe or raw? Are you dizzy from sweetmeats and wine, or a knight on the field of battle? (D 21377–83)

Beyond all the levels of spirit stands God Himself. But just as God might be called the "Meaning of meanings," so also He may be referred to as the "Spirit of spirits." Although He is beyond all the limitations of the spirit, since He created it, nevertheless His relationship to the spirit is similar to the relationship of the spirit to the body.

Since He is the Spirit of the spirit, there is no escape from Him: I have not seen a single spirit be an enemy to the Friend. (D 4655)

Thou art the Spirit of our spirit, the Meaning of the Names, the Existence of all things, the Source of love's tumult. (D 34134)

Oh painting, you have gone toward the Painter! Oh spirit, you have passed on to the Spirit of the spirit! (D 29160)

If that Spirit of the spirit of the spirit should show Himself to the bodies, my body would become a spirit through His Gentleness, my spirit would laugh in delight. (D 26772)

Thou art insight's Insight and reality's Reality! Thou art the Light of the light of the mysteries, the Spirit of the spirit of the spirit! (D 27041)

Inwardly Thou art the Spirit of the spirit of the spirit of the spirit, outwardly the Sun of the sun! (D 28789)

3. THE EGO AND THE INTELLECT

Rūmī often refers to the animal spirit by the terms *nafs*, which is most commonly rendered into English as "soul" or "self." In Arabic and Persian the term *nafs* is somethimes synonomous with the terms *rūḥ* or *jān*, i.e., "spirit." Rūmī himself occasionally uses the term to refer to the higher levels of the spirit. But most often he employs the term *nafs* to refer to the animal spirit. In this usage he is inspired at least partly by the Koranic verse, "Yet I claim not that my soul (*nafs*) was innocent: Verily the soul of man incites to evil" (XII 53). Sufis and others often refer to this "soul" as *nafs-i ammārah*, "the soul which incites (to evil)." Because of the negative connotations of this "soul" and the positive and spiritual connotations of the word "soul" in English, I have chosen to translate the word as "ego."[7]

When Solomon leaves the palace, the jinni takes over as king: When patience and intellect go, your ego incites to evil.[8] (D 5798)

The sensual ego is blind and deaf to God. (M IV 235)

The whole Koran describes the wickedness of egos: Study the Holy Book! Where is your insight? (M VI 4862)

Concern yourself not with the thieflike ego and its business. Whatever is not God's work is nothing, nothing! (M II 1063)

The bird that escapes from the trap of its ego has no fear, wherever it may fly. (D 7327)

The ego's likeness is an autumn within which a garden is concealed. When the spring-spirit arrives, the garden smiles from within. (D 29958)

You have abandoned Jesus and nurtured his ass. That is why, like an ass, you must remain outside the curtain.

Science and knowledge are the good fortune of Jesus, not of the ass, oh asinine man! . . .

Have mercy on Jesus, not the ass! Let not your animal nature rule your intellect. . . .

When the Prophet said, "Put the females last!", he meant your ego.[9] For it must be put last, and your intellect first.

Your base intellect has acquired the disposition of asses. Its thought is this: "How shall I find the fodder?" (M II 1850–51, 53, 56–57)

What a shame, my ass has gone! My ass suddenly died! Thanks be to God: Ass's dung has gone far from my doorstep!

The death of asses is difficult, but in my case, it was good luck. For now that my ass has gone, Jesus is beside me.

How I have become exhausted and spent looking for pails of fodder! I became emaciated and bent for the sake of my emaciated ass!

What that ass did to me, no vicious wolf could ever do. Most of me has been lost, by God, through the pain and heartache it inflicted. (D 19072–75)

God is Omniscient, and since the spirit is "from the command of my Lord," one of its essential characteristics is knowledge and awareness. But the ego is so far removed from the luminosity and pure consciousness of the spirit that, like the body, it cannot perceive the light that shines in its darkness.

By its very nature the spirit possesses the faculty of discernment, which is known as the "intellect." The differences in spiritual levels among human beings derive to a large extent from the different degrees to which the light of the intellect penetrates the veil of the ego. In practically any human being, the intellect and the ego are at war. In most people, the ego is winning the battle, which is why they cannot distinguish between truth and falsehood, the real and the unreal, meaning and form. In the prophets and the saints, the intellect has won. In those who follow them, the "believers," the intellect has the upper hand.

A falcon and a crow were put into one cage: Wounds distress them both. . .

Within our breast an intellect and an ego are in strife and tribulation, drunken with separation from their Source. (D 33508, 10)

If the braying of your ass-ego were to diminish, the call of your intellect would be your Messiah. (D 34042)

By its nature the intellect sees the outcome of affairs; the ego looks not at outcomes.

The intellect vanquished by the ego becomes the ego—Jupiter checkmated by Saturn is inauspicious. (M II 1548–49)

The intellect is luminous and seeks the good. How then can the dark ego vanquish it?

The ego is in its own bodily home, and your intellect is a stranger: At its doorstep, a dog is an awesome lion. (M III 2557–58)

4. THE UNIVERSAL INTELLECT AND THE PARTIAL INTELLECT

Only the intellects of the prophets and saints have truly vanquished the ego. Once the clouds have been dispersed, the sun shines down unhindered. In its full radiance the intellect is referred to as the "Universal Intellect" (*'aql-i kullī*) or the "Intellect of the intellect." At this stage the intellect can discern the meaning of every form and "see things as they are." In the majority of human beings, no matter what sort of great minds they may have or how "intellectual" they may be, the intellect is veiled by the dross of the ego. Such veiled intellects are referred to as "partial intellects" (*'aql-i juzwī*). Naturally there are many different levels of partial intellect. And although the Universal Intellect is essentially one reality, it does not reveal itself to every saint and prophet to the same degree.

The partial intellect needs nourishment from outside; through it one can acquire by learning and study the "science of bodies." But the Universal Intellect is sufficient unto itself. It is the source of the "science of religions" and has no need for any sort of outside aid.

The intellect is of two kinds: The first is acquired. You learn it like a boy at school,

From books, teachers, reflection and rote, from concepts and from excellent and new sciences.

Your intellect becomes greater than that of others, but you are heavily burdened because of your acquisition. . . .

The other intellect is a gift of God. Its fountainhead lies in the midst of the spirit.

When the water of knowledge bubbles up from the breast, it will never become stagnant, old, or discolored.

If the way to its outside source should become blocked, there is no reason to worry since the water keeps on bubbling up from within the house.

The acquired intellect is like a stream led into a house from outside.

If its way should be blocked, it is helpless. Seek the fountain from within yourself! (M IV 1960–63, 65–68)

Be well aware of the discrepancies among intellects, which extend in degrees from earth to heaven!

There is an intellect like the disc of the sun, and another less than Venus or a shooting star.

There is an intellect happily flickering like a lamp, and another like a spark of fire. . . .

Partial intellect has disgraced the Intellect; desire for the world has deprived man of the Object of his desire. (M V 459–461 and 463)

Muḥammad was not said to be "unlettered" (*ummī*) because he was incapable of writing or ignorant of the sciences. He is called "unlettered" because his writing, science and wisdom were innate, not acquired. Should a person who can inscribe characters on the moon be unable to write? What was there in the world that he did not know? For indeed, everyone learns from him. What sort of thing could the partial intellect possess not possessed by the Universal Intellect? The partial intellect is unable to produce anything from itself that it has not first seen.

These compositions, engineering feats and structures that people erect are not new compositions. Having seen something like them, human beings merely make additions. Those who truly produce something new from themselves are the Universal Intellect. The partial intellect can be taught; it is in need of teaching. But the Universal Intellect is the teacher; it has no needs. (F 142/151)

The philosopher is in bondage to intellectual concepts; the pure saint is mounted upon the Intellect of intellect.

The Intellect of intellect is the kernel, your intellect the husk. The stomachs of animals are always seeking husks.

The seeker of the kernel has a hundred loathings for the husk; in the eyes of the goodly saints, the kernel alone is truly lawful.

Since the skin of the intellect gives a hundred proofs, how should the Universal Intellect ever take a step without certainty? (M III 2527–30)

5. THE HEART

The ultimate center of man's consciousness, his inmost reality, his "meaning" as known by God, is called the "heart" (*dil, qalb*).[10] As for the lump of flesh within the breast, that is the shadow or outermost skin of the heart. Between this heart and that heart are infinite levels of consciousness and self-realization.

As man's inmost reality, the heart is always with God. But only the prophets and saints—who are called the "Possessors of the Heart"—have achieved God-consciousness, whereby they are truly and actually aware of God at the center of their being. Most men are veiled by innumerable levels of dross and darkness, so that in practice the center of their consciousness or "heart" is their animal spirit or ego.

Why is the heart a stranger in the two worlds? Because the attributes of Placelessness shy away from place. (D 28934)

When you look carefully, you see that all good qualities dwell in the heart. All these disgraceful qualities derive from water and clay. (D 4220)

You are luminous water, do not throw clay into the water! Conceal not the heart, call not the heart's veil the heart! (D 21567)

Most people are man-eaters—expect no security when they say, "Peace be upon you!"

Their hearts are all houses of Satan. Accept not the drivel of devilish men! (M II 251–252)

In relation to the Possessor of the Heart these partial hearts are like bodies, for he is the mine. (M II 839)

The house of the heart that remains without illumination from the rays of the Magnificent Sun

Is narrow and dark like a miser's soul, empty of the Loving King's sweet taste.

The Sun's light does not shine in that heart, space does not expand, doors do not open:

The grave would be more pleasant for you—so come, arise from the tomb of your heart! (M II 3129–32)

Return to yourself, oh heart! For from the heart a hidden road can be found to the Beloved.

If the world of the six directions has no door, then come to the heart—you can make a door.

Come into the heart, the place of contemplating God! Though it is not so now, it can be made so. (D 6885–87)

Within you is a Moon, such a Moon that the sun keeps calling from heaven, "Oh, I am Thy slave, Thy slave!"

Seek the Moon from your own breast, like Moses.[11] Gaze into your own window and say, "Hello! Hello!" (D 18190–91)

Close down speech's door and open up the heart's window! The Moon will only kiss you through the window. (D 19863)

In the lane of Love a shout rose up: "A window has opened up in the house, the heart!"

What is this talk of windows? For a new Sun has arisen: not even a needle's breadth of shadow remains! (D 20085–86)

Once the mirror of your heart becomes pure and clear, you will see pictures from beyond the domain of water and clay,

Not only pictures but also the Painter, not only the carpet of good fortune, but also the Carpet-spreader. (M II 72–73)

The saints have polished their breasts until cleansed of greed, cupidity, avarice, and hatred.

Without doubt the pure mirror is the heart acting as a receptacle for infinite pictures.

The Moses-like saint possesses within his breast, in his heart's mirror, the infinite, formless Form of the Unseen.

What does it matter if that Form is not contained by the heavens, the divine Throne, the Footstool, or the Fish supporting the earth?

These things are all delimited and defined, but the heart's mirror has no limits—Know that!

Here the intellect must remain silent, or else lead us astray. For the heart is with Him—indeed, the heart is He. (M I 3484–89)

How should the orients of the lights of Almighty God be contained in the heart? Yet when you seek His Light, you find it there. But this does not mean that His Light is truly contained within it. Rather, you find it in the heart, just as you find your own picture in a mirror, though your picture is not truly contained by it. But when you look into the mirror, you see yourself. (F 165–166/174)

These last two passages allude to a famous saying of the Prophet concerning the heart: "God says, 'My heavens and My earth encompass Me not, but the heart of My gentle, believing, and meek servant does encompass Me.'" Rūmī often refers to this hadith directly or indirectly.

> Through God's perfect power the bodies of spiritual men have gained the strength to bear the ineffable Light. . . .
>
> Hence the Seal of the Prophets related a saying from the eternal and everlasting King:
>
> "I am not contained in the heavens and the void, in the supernal intellects and souls,
>
> Yet I stay like a guest in the believer's heart, without qualification, definition, or description." (VI 3066, 71–73)
>
> Outside of the seven heavens, greater than the two worlds! And this is wonderful: That Ineffable One is hidden within the heart! (D 24544)
>
> The seven heavens are too narrow for Him. How does He enter my shirt? (D 18348)
>
> If the two worlds were to enter my heart, they would be contemptible. What a wonderful expansion Thou hast given my wounded heart through Thy love! (D 30224)

The heart of the saint "contains" God, while the heart of the ordinary man is mired in water and clay. What determines the worth of a man is the state of his heart. Man's task in this world is to cleanse his heart, to polish it, and ultimately to make of it a perfect mirror reflecting God. This he can only accomplish with the guidance of the Possessor of the Heart.

> Oh heart! God will look upon you when, like a part, you return to your whole.
>
> God keeps on saying, "We look upon the heart, not upon the form, for that is water and clay."
>
> You keep on saying, "I also have a heart." The heart is above God's Throne, not below it!
>
> Certainly dark clay also contains water, but not water with which to make an ablution.
>
> Though it is water, it has been vanquished by clay. So do not say concerning your heart, "This too is a heart."
>
> The heart that is beyond the heavens is the heart of the saints or the Prophet.

Purified, cleansed of clay, it has entered into increase and become all-sufficient.

It has abandoned clay and come to the Sea. Freed from clay's prison, now it belongs to the Sea. . . .

You are obstinate and say, "I am a Possessor of the Heart. I have no need for anyone else, I am in union with God"—

As if water in the midst of clay were obstinate: "I am water, why should I seek help?"

Imagining this polluted thing to be a heart, you turn your heart away from the Possessor of the Heart.

Do you really allow that this object fascinated by milk and honey can be a heart?

The taste of milk and honey reflects the heart; the sweetness of every sweet thing derives from the heart.

So the heart is the substance and the world the accident. How should the heart's shadow be the heart's goal?

Does a heart fall in love with property and position and submit itself to this black water and clay,

Or to fantasies, worshiping them in darkness for the sake of empty talk?

The heart is nothing but that Ocean of Light. Is the heart to be the locus for God's vision, and then blind?

Among hundreds of thousands of the elect and the vulgar, no heart is to be found: The heart is in one person. Which one is he? Which one?[12] (M III 2243–50, 61–70)

6. INTERRELATIONSHIPS

Rūmī does not distinguish clearly and absolutely among the heart, the spirit, and the intellect. Each of these pertains to man's meaning as opposed to his form. Perhaps we can say that the spirit is the broadest in scope, embracing the whole of man's inward reality; the term "intellect" lays stress upon the spirit's power of discernment; and the word "heart" emphasizes consciousness and especially God-consciousness. But each of these terms is sometimes employed synonomously with one or both of the others, and each denotes a multileveled reality. Hence, when Rūmī refers to "intellect," he may be referring to any of a broad spectrum of realities ranging from the lowest level of the partial intellect to the highest degree of the Universal Intellect. When he mentions "spirit," he may be alluding to any of the three higher levels of spirit, to the ego, or to God. And by "heart" he may mean someone's center of consciousness in a general sense, or the heart of the "Possessor of the Heart," or any of the myriad

levels between. In any case, the context of the discussion usually makes clear which meaning he has in mind.

> Sense perception is in bondage to the intellect, oh friend! And know too that the intellect is in bondage to the spirit. (M III 1824)
>
> The body is outward, the spirit hidden; the body is like the sleeve, the spirit the hand.
>
> Then intellect is more hidden than spirit: The senses perceive the spirit more quickly.
>
> You see a movement, you know there is life. But you do not know it is filled with the intellect. . . .
>
> The spirit of prophetic revelation is beyond the intellect; coming from the Unseen, it belongs to that side. (M II 3253–55, 58)
>
> Open your eyes! See the spirits that have fled from the body! The spirit has smashed the cage, the heart has fled from the body! (D 25039)
>
> The spirit has become disengaged from the body's uproar! It flies upon the wing of the heart without the body's foot. (M V 1721)
>
> What is the spirit? One-half of a leaf from the garden of Thy Beauty. What is the heart? A single blossom from Thy provisions and plenty. (D 23706)
>
> Without doubt the intellects and hearts derive from the divine Throne, but they live veiled from the Throne's light. (M V 619)
>
> From the passion of man and woman, blood boiled and became sperm. Those two drops erected a tent in midair.
>
> Then the army of the human individual came from the world of the spirit: the intellect the vizier, the heart the king.
>
> After a time, the heart remembered the city of the spirit. The whole army returned and entered the world of Everlastingness. (D 8797–99)

C.

God and the World

1. THE ESSENCE, ATTRIBUTES, AND ACTS

In Islamic theology and metaphysics a distinction is made between God in Himself, or the divine Essence (*dhāt*), and God as He describes Himself in revelation. Thus in the Koran God calls Himself by many Names, such as the "Merciful," the "All-Knowing," the "Living," the "All-Powerful." From these Names (*asmā'*) we understand that He possesses the Attributes (*ṣifāt*) of Mercy, Knowledge, Life, and Power. But what is God in Himself, in His very Essence? That is beyond our grasp. Hence the Moslems distinguish between God's Essence on the one hand and His Names and Attributes on the other.

The distinction between the Essence and the Attributes is purely conceptual, in the sense that there is no ontological difference between the two sides. The Names and Attributes are not different from the Essence in their existence. The Essence is One, and each Name and Attribute is identical with the Essence. Nevertheless, there must obviously be some difference between God's Forgiveness and His Vengeance, or between His Sight and His Hearing. This difference, however, is not manifested within the Essence, which is One in every respect; it only becomes apparent within His "Acts" (*afāl*) or "Effects" (*āthār*), which are also called "creatures" (*khalq, makhlūqāt*). In God's Essence, Vengeance and Mercy are identical, for at that level there can be no duality of any kind. But in creation, these two Attributes can be manifested through an infinite variety of forms, two of the most salient of which are heaven and hell.

Consider the creatures as pure and limpid water, within which shine the Attributes of the Almighty.

Their knowledge, their justice, their kindness—all are stars of heaven reflected in flowing water.

Kings are a locus of manifestation for God's Kingliness, the learned a locus for His Knowledge.

Generations have passed, and this is a new generation. The moon is the same, the water different.

Justice is the same justice, learning the same learning, but peoples and nations have changed.

Generation upon generation has passed, oh friend, but these Meanings are constant and everlasting.

The water in the stream has changed many times, but the reflection of the moon and the stars remains the same. . . .

All pictured forms are reflections in the water of the stream; when you rub your eyes, indeed, all are He. (M VI 3172–78, 83)

God's Acts are divided into two fundamental kinds: the spiritual and the material. Hence there are three basic levels of existence: God, the spiritual world, and the material world. The Koran refers to all three in the verse, "Verily His are the creation and the command" (VII 54). Here "creation" refers to the physical creation, while "command" denotes the spiritual world, which, as was pointed out above, is "from the command of my Lord."

Know that in the verse, *His are the creation and the command*, "creation" is the form and "command" the spirit mounted upon it. (M VI 78)

The divine Love is the sun of perfection, its light is the command and the creatures are as shadows. (M VI 983)

The pomp and splendor of the creatures is borrowed, the pomp and splendor of the command is inherent. (M II 1103)

The world of creation possesses quarters and directions, but the world of the command and the Attributes are without directions.

Know that the world of command is without directions, oh friend! Therefore the Commander is even more directionless.

The intellect is without directions, and the "Teacher of the Exposition" (God; cf. Koran LV 4) is more intellect than intellect, more spirit than spirit.

No creature is without connection to Him, but that connection is ineffable, oh uncle!

For within the spirit is no separation or joining, but thought cannot conceive of other than these two . . .

How should the intellect find its way to this connection? For it is in bondage to separation and joining.

Hence Muhammad counseled us, "Do not investigate God's Essence!"

That which can be conceived concerning His Essence—that in reality is not with a view toward His Essence. (M IV 3692–96, 699–701)

Since you have not the endurance for His Essence, turn your eyes toward the Attributes. Since you do not see the Directionless, behold His light in the directions. (D 4106)

The man veiled from the Attributes sees His handiwork, while he who has lost sight of the Essence is with the Attributes.

Since those who have attained union with Him are drowned in the Essence, oh youth, how should they gaze at His Attributes? (M II 2812–13)

After all, you also see God at this very moment, in His Effects and Acts. Every instant you see something different, for none of His Acts resembles any other. (F 113–114/124–125)

Read the verse, *Every day He is upon some labor* (LV 29): Imagine not that He is without acts and activity.

The least of His Acts each day is that He sends out three armies:

An army from the loins toward the mothers, so that fruit may grow in the womb;

An army from the wombs to this dustbin, so that the world may be filled with male and female;

And an army from this dust to the grave, so that each person may see his good works. (M I 3071–75)

The effects and the fruits of God's mercy are manifest, but who except Himself knows mercy's essence?

No one knows any of the essences of His Attributes of Perfection except through their effects and through analogy.

The child knows not the essence of copulation, except that you tell him, "It is something like candy."

How should the essence of sexual ecstacy be like the essence of candy, oh master? . . .

To be unable to perceive the essence, oh uncle, is the state of the common people, not of everyone,

For essences, and the mystery of their mystery, are manifestly visible before the eyes of the perfect saints.

In the whole of existence, where is anything further from understanding and penetration than the mystery and Essence of God?

Since that does not remain hidden from His intimates, what essence and attribute can remain concealed? (M III 3635–38, 50–53)

God is exceedingly near to you. Whatever thought and idea you conceive, God is next to it. For He gives existence to the thought and idea and places it before you. But He is so near that you cannot see Him. What is so strange about that? Whatever you do, your intellect is with you, initiating the action. But you cannot see the intellect. Although you see its effects, you cannot see its essence. (F 172/180)

When we say that God is not in the heavens, we do not mean that He is not in the heavens. What we mean is that the heavens do not encompass Him, but He encompasses them. He has a connection to the heavens, but it is ineffable and inscrutable, just as He has established an ineffable and inscrutable connection with you. Everything is in the hand of His Power. Everything is the locus of His Self-manifestation and under His control. So He is not outside the heavens and the created worlds, nor is He completely inside them. In other words, these things do not encompass Him, but He encompasses them. (F 212/219)

2. GENTLENESS AND SEVERITY

The Names and Attributes can be divided into two categories, known as the "Attributes of the Essence" and the "Attributes of the Acts." The first category includes all those Names whose opposites may not properly be applied to God. Thus God is the Living, the Powerful, the Seeing, etc., but He is not their opposites. The second category includes Names whose opposites are also God's Names, such as the "Exalter" and the "Abaser," the "Life-giver" and the "Slayer". Many of the Names of the Acts in turn can be divided into two further categories, which are known as the Attributes of Gentleness (*lutf*) and the Attributes of Severity (*qahr*). The accompanying table lists a few of the divine Names according to this scheme.[13]

Rūmī understands the Name "Gentle" as equivalent to the Name "Merciful," and the Name "Severe" as equivalent to "Wrathful". According to a famous saying of God related by the Prophet, God says,

"My Mercy is prior to My Wrath." For Rūmī, this is the same as saying "My Gentle Names are prior to and take precedence over My Severe Names." The mercy, joy, and beauty which Rūmī sees inherent in all of creation and dominating in all of its forms may be said to derive from this way of looking at God's Names and Attributes: All creation is a manifestation of God's Severe and Gentle Names, but the latter always take precedence ontologically over the former. Wherever we may see the manifestation of Wrath and Severity, e.g., in suffering and evil, we should know that God's Mercy and Gentleness will soon manifest themselves. Or rather, all suffering and evil exist only to manifest a greater joy and good. However bleak the form may be, the meaning is always Mercy, which is eternally prior to Wrath.

> God has two Attributes: Severity and Gentleness. The prophets are the locus of manifestation for both Attributes, while the believers manifest His Gentleness, and the unbelievers manifest His Severity. (F 222/227)
>
> Laughter tells of Thy Gentleness, lamentation complains of Thy Severity.
>
> In the world these two conflicting messages tell of a single Beloved.

Table I
Some of the Divine Names

	Names of the Acts	
Names of the Essence	*Severe Names*	*Gentle Names*
King	Severe	Gentle
Holy	Abaser	Exalter
Just	Humiliator	Honorer
Protector	Slayer	Life-Giver
Light	Avenger	Pardoner
Creator	Depriver	Enricher
Living	Harmer	Benefiter
Powerful	Straitener	Expander
Knowing		
Hearing		
Seeing		
Speaking		
Willing		

Gentleness deceives a forgetful person: He thinks not of Severity and commits a sin.

Severity deprives another of hope: He turns to total despair.

Love, like a kindly mediator, comes to the protection of these two lost souls. (D 8571–75)

When you look at His Gentleness, stones and boulders become wax; when you look at His Severity, even your wax becomes granite. (D 5795)

His Mercy is prior to His Wrath. If you want spiritual priority, go, seek the prior Attribute! (M IV 3205)

Hell's fire is but a mote of God's Severity, a whip to threaten the base.

Although He has such a mighty and overpowering Severity, look at the coolness of His Gentleness, which is prior to it!

It is an ineffable and inscrutable priority in the realm of meaning: Have you ever seen a prior and a posterior without duality? . . .

Severity is truly awesome, but once you begin to tremble, that awesomeness becomes soft and smooth;

For the awesome shape is aimed at the denier—once you become helpless, it turns into Gentleness and Kindness. (M IV 3742–44, 53–54)

3. THE REASON FOR CREATION

Creation—or the universe and the infinite forms that fill it—is another name for God's Acts, and His Acts are the manifestation of His Attributes. Having understood this, if we are asked, "Why did God create the world?" the answer is clear: in order to manifest His own Names and Attributes. The very nature of Divinity requires some sort of activity. For if we say that God is the "Creator," what meaning can that term have if there is no creation? God created the world to display His Attributes. Hence the Prophet reported that God said, "I was a Hidden Treasure, so I wanted to be known. Therefore I created the world that I might be known." The goal of creation is "making manifest" (*iẓhār*).

If the exposition of meanings were sufficient, the creation of the world would be vain and useless.

If love for God were only thought and meaning, the form of fasting and prayer would not exist.

The gifts that lovers exchange are naught in relation to love except forms,

So that the gifts may give witness to the love hidden within. (M I 2624–27)

God says, "I was a Hidden Treasure, so I wanted to be known." In other words, "I created the whole of the universe, and the goal in all of it is to make Myself manifest, sometimes through Gentleness and sometimes through Severity." God is not the kind of king for whom a single herald would be sufficient. If all the atoms of the universe were His heralds, they would be incapable of making Him known adequately.

Therefore all creatures make God manifest, day and night. However, some of them know this and are aware of their making Him manifest, while others are heedless. Whatever the case may be, their making God manifest is certain. For example, a prince commands that someone should be beaten and punished, and that person screams and shouts. Nevertheless, both beater and beaten are making the prince's commands manifest. (F 176–177/184–185)

God did not increase by bringing the universe into existence; He did not become what He had not been formerly.

But effects increased when He brought the creatures into existence: between these two increases there is a difference.

The increase of *effects* is His making Himself manifest, so that His Attributes and Acts may become visible.

But the increase of an *essence* would be proof that it is of temporal origin and subject to causes. (M IV 1666–69)

The universe was created for the sake of manifestation, in order that the Treasure of Wisdom might not remain hidden.

He said, "I was a Hidden Treasure." Listen! Do not lose touch with your own substance, make yourself manifest! (M IV 3028–29)

God says, "We are the Unveiler of the Mystery and Our work is just this: We bring forth these concealed things from their hiding places.

Although the thief remains silent in denial, the magistrate forces him to confess.

All these earths have stolen Our bounties so that We may bring them to confess through affliction." (M IV 1014–16)

God tells us, "Just as I wanted to manifest My Treasure, so I wanted to manifest your ability to recognize that

Treasure. Just as I wanted to display the Purity and Gentleness of this Ocean, so I wanted to display the high aspirations and the growth through Gentleness of the fish and the creatures of the Sea. Hence they may behold their own fidelity and display their aspirations. *Do people think they will be left to say "We believe" and that they will not be tried?* (XXIX, 2). Hundreds of thousands of snakes claim to be fish. Their forms are the forms of fish, but their meanings are the meanings of snakes." (MS 29)

4. OPPOSITES

Rūmī often refers to or quotes the proverbial expression, "Things become clear through their opposites." Everyday experience confirms this truth, for the existence of the myriad things of the world only becomes possible through differentiation and opposition. If two things were not different, and therefore "opposed" in some respect, they would be one and the same. Each individual of a pair of opposites makes the existence of the other individual possible; day and night, perfection and imperfection, wholeness and brokenness, happiness and sadness, newness and oldness, spirit and body. Each of these correlative terms can only exist and be known because of its opposite. And so it is with all things, except God. He alone has no opposite, but transcends all opposition. He alone is the true "coincidence of opposites" (*jam'-i aḍdād*), where all opposition is effaced in the Ocean of Unity. For the same reason, we cannot know Him, since He has no opposite to "make Him clear."

God created suffering and heartache so that joyful-heartedness might appear through its opposite.

Hence hidden things become manifest through opposites. But since God has no opposite, He remains hidden.

For the sight falls first upon light, then upon color: Opposites are made manifest through opposites, like white and black.

So you have come to know light through light's opposite: Opposites display opposites within the breast.

God's light has no opposite within existence, that through its opposite it might be made manifest.

Therefore our *eyes comprehend Him not, but He comprehends the eyes* (VI 104): Learn this from Moses at Mount Sinai.[14]

Know that form springs from meaning as the lion from the thicket, or as voice and speech from thought. . . .

Form was born from speech and then died. It took its wave back to the sea.

Form comes out from Formlessness: Then it returns, for *unto Him we are returning* (II 156). (M I 1130–36, 40–41)

So the locus of manifestation for a thing is its opposite, and each opposite aids its own opposite.

If you write upon a black page, your script will be hidden, since both are the color of tar. (D 3761–62)

He who has not seen the constancy of Moses' serpent imagines that the sorcerers' cords are alive.[15]

A bird which has never drunk limpid water washes its feathers and wings in a salt pond.

No opposite can be known without its opposite: Having suffered a blow, you will know a caress. (M V 597–599)

You will not know evil until you know the good: You can discern an opposite through its opposite, oh youth! (M IV 1345)

Every light has a fire, every rose a thorn; a serpent watches over every treasure hidden in the ruins.

Oh, Thy Rosegarden has no thorns! Thy pure Light has no fire! Around Thy Treasure is no serpent, no blow, no teeth! (D 25634–35)

His description is not contained within the intellect, for He is the Coincidence of Opposites. Wonderful Composition without composition! Wonderful freely acting Compelled One! (D 26832)

The Creator is the Abaser and the Exalter: Without these two Attributes, no Act could be performed.

Look at the abasement of the earth and the exaltation of the heavens: Without these two Attributes, the heavens could not revolve, oh friend!

The abasement and exaltation of the land is of another kind: Half the year it is desolate, half green and fresh.

The abasement and exaltation of this distressful Time is of another sort: half day and half night.

The abasement and exaltation of this compounded bodily constitution is that sometimes it is well and sometimes it suffers illness.

Know that all the states of the world are like this: famine and drought, peace and war—all for our tribulation. (M VI 1847–52)

Divine Wisdom has tied these opposites together. Oh Butcher, You have given neck with the fillet!

The spirit cannot act without the body. Without the spirit, the body is withered and cold.

Your body is manifest and your spirit hidden: These two put all the business of the world in order.

If you strike someone's head with earth, his head will not break. If you strike it with water, it still will not break.

If you want to break his head, mix the dirt with water. (M V 3422–26)

Life is peace among opposites, death the appearance of strife among them.

God's Gentleness has paired this lion and sheep, these two far distant opposites. (M I 1293–94)

In a few of the above verses, Rūmī alludes to the opposition within the fundamental structure of the natural world, i.e., the four elements: earth, air, fire, and water. These four elements, which never become manifest themselves, represent the basic ontological tendencies within the outward world. The four outward substances which bear their names are only their most direct reflections. But everything which exists in the physical world, including the outward earth, air, fire, and water, is a mixture of the four elements. Hence the domain of the pure elements is said to be four spheres lying between the heavens, or the spiritual world, and the earth, or the material world.

In the last analysis, the elements, which are often referred to as the "pillars" (*arkān*) of the material world, are the fundamental ontological directions given to this world by the divine Attributes. Certain Sufis speak of the four "pillars" of Divinity, meaning the four most fundamental divine Attributes, and describe the elements as the outward manifestation of these four Names.[16]

Each element represents a double quality, as shown in the accompanying table. Each is the opposite of every other element in respect of one or both of these qualities. The mixture of the elements brings about the existence of the physical world.

When you look carefully, this world is all war: Mote fights with mote, like belief with unbelief. . . .

But in the light of the spiritual eye, our war and our peace are not from ourselves: They are "between His two fingers."[17]

The war of nature, the war of acts, the war of words—in the midst of the individual parts a frightful war.

The world subsists through this war: Look at the four elements and resolve this difficulty.

Table II
The Opposition among the Elements

		AIR		
		hot wet		
	hot		wet	
FIRE				WATER
	dry		cold	
		cold dry		
		EARTH		

The four elements are four sturdy pillars, through which the roof of the heavens is kept in place.

But each pillar destroys the other: Water's pillar destroys that of fire.

So creation is built upon opposites: Inevitably we are warring over profit and loss. . . .

But that world is naught but everlasting and flourishing, since it is not compounded of opposites.

Each opposite inflicts reciprocal annihilation upon its opposite; when opposition disappears, subsistence alone remains. . . .

Colorlessness is the root of all colors, peace the root of all wars.

That world is the root of this abode full of heartaches; union is the root of every parting and separation.

Why are we in such opposition, oh friend? Why does Unity give birth to this multiplicity?

Because we are the branch, and the four opposite elements the root. The root has engendered its qualities in the branch.

Since the substance of the spirit is beyond separation, it does not partake of these qualities: Its qualities

are those of the divine Majesty. (M VI 36, 45–50, 56–57, 59–63)

5. GOOD AND EVIL

Opposition within creation is always relative, in the sense that there can be no absolute distinctions. Absolute knowledge, absolute life, absolute power—these are all God's Attributes. But when they become manifested within the world, they are weakened and sullied through their distance from their Source. Hence the "knowledge" and "power" found in this world are only a dim reflection of the pure and transcendent Attributes of God Himself.

For many people, the most troubling opposition found in the world is that between "good" and "evil." From what was said above, it becomes obvious that absolute goodness can be found only in God. Various degrees of evil derive from the dimming of goodness as it becomes distant from the Source. In the world, things are relatively good and evil, not absolutely so, since there can be no absolute qualities within creation. From another point of view, things are good and evil only in relation to us, not in relation to God, for in His eyes all things are performing but one task: making the Hidden Treasure manifest. Moreover, if there were no evil in the world, there would be no means whereby many of God's Attributes could manifest themselves, e.g., Forgiveness and Vengefulness. What sins could He forgive, and for what would He take vengeance? In any case, the perfection of the Painter's infinite creativity demands that He paint both beautiful and ugly pictures.

> So there is no absolute evil in the world, for evil is relative—know this also.
>
> In the whole of Time there is no poison or candy that is not a foot for one and a shackle for another.
>
> For one it is a foot, for another the foot's chain. For one it is poison, for another candy.
>
> The snake's poison is life for the snake, but death in relation to man.
>
> Creatures of water see the ocean as a garden, creatures of earth see it as death and torment. (M IV 65–69)
>
> Nothing God has created is in vain, whether wrath or forbearance, sincere counsel or guile.
>
> None of these things is absolutely good, none absolutely evil.
>
> The benefit and harm of each depends upon the situation. For this reason knowledge is necessary and useful. (M VI 2597–99)

If all knowledge and no ignorance were in man, he would be consumed and cease to be. Therefore ignorance is desirable, for through it man remains in existence; and knowledge is desirable, for it leads to the direct knowledge of God. So each of them aids the other. All opposites are similar: Although night is the opposite of day, it is day's helper, and the two perform one task. . . .

Hence all opposites appear as opposites to us. But the wise man knows that they perform but one task and are not opposites. Show me an evil in the world without good, and a good without evil! For example, a man is bent upon murder, but he occupies himself with fornication, so he sheds no blood. In respect of being fornication, his act is bad; but in respect of preventing murder, it is good. So good and evil are a single thing and cannot be separated.

This is why we debate with the Zoroastrians. They say that there are two Gods, one the creator of evil and the other the creator of good. All right, you show me good without evil. Then I will admit that there is a God of evil and a God of good. But this is absurd, for good is not separate from evil. Since they are not two things and there is no separation between them, it is impossible for there to be two Creators. (F 213–214/221)

Everything is good and perfect in relation to God, but not in relation to us. Fornication and purity, abandonment of the daily prayers and praying, unbelief and Islam, idolatry and the profession of God's Unity—all are good in relation to God. But in relation to us fornication, theft, unbelief, and idolatry are bad, while the profession of Unity, prayer, and acts of charity are good. But in relation to God, all are good.

For example, in a king's realm there are prisons, gallows, robes of honor, wealth, estates, retinue, banquets, joy, drums, and banners. In relation to the king, all are good. Just as robes of honor are the perfection of his kingdom, so also gallows and executions and prisons are all perfections of his kingdom. In relation to him, all are perfection. But in relation to his people, how could the gallows be the same as a robe of honor? (F 31/42–43)

If you say that evils also derive from Him, how does that diminish His bountifulness?

His giving evil is also His Perfection: Let me give you an example, oh honored man!

A painter made two kinds of pictures, some delightful and some without delight.

He painted Joseph and sweet-natured houris; he painted ugly devils and satans.[18]

Both kinds of pictures display his mastery. They do not represent his ugliness, they are his munificence.

He makes the ugly of utmost ugliness: All uglinesses swarm about it,

So that the perfection of his knowledge might become manifest and the denier of his mastery disgraced.

If he cannot make ugly pictures, he is imperfect: That is why God creates both unbeliever and sincere servant.

In this respect both unbelief and faith bear witness to Him: Both prostrate themselves before His Lordliness.

However, the believer prostrates himself willingly, for his intention is to seek God's good-pleasure.

Unwillingly, the unbeliever also worships God, but he aims at some other desire. (M II 2535–45)

The Sufi said to the judge, "He whose aid is sought has the ability to make our trading without loss.

He who turns fire into trees and rosegardens can also make this world a place without harm.

He who produces roses from the midst of thorns can make our December into spring.

He from whom every cypress grows straight and free can turn our grief into joy.

He from whom every nonexistent thing has come into existence—how would He be any less if He made that thing everlasting?

He who gives the body a spirit so that it may live—how would He lose if He did not cause it to die?

After all, what would happen if that Generous One gave each servant his soul's desire without toil,

And kept far from His weak creatures the wiles of the ego and the temptations of the devil waiting in ambush?"

The judge replied, "If there were no bitter commands, beauty and ugliness, stones and pearls,

If there were no satan, ego, and self-will, and if there were no blows, battle, and war,

Then by what name would the King call His servants, oh abandoned man?

How could He say, 'Oh patient man! Oh forbearing man!'? How could He say, 'Oh brave man! Oh wise man!'?

How could there be *the patient, the sincere and the spending* (III 17) without a highwayman and accursed devil?

Rustam, Ḥamzah and a catamite would all be one.[19] Knowledge and wisdom would be useless and abolished.

Knowledge and wisdom exist to distinguish the right from the wrong: If everything were the right way, then wisdom would be useless.

Do you consider it permissible to destroy both worlds for the sake of keeping open the shop of your worthless natural disposition?

Of course, I know that you are pure, not unripe, and that your question is for the sake of the vulgar." (M VI 1739–55)

God wills both good and evil, but He only approves of the good. For God said, "I was a Hidden Treasure, so I wanted to be known." Without doubt, God wills both to command and to prohibit. Commands are only proper if the act which is commanded is disliked by him who is commanded to perform it. One does not say, "Eat sweetmeats and sugar, oh hungry man!" And if one does say it, it is not called a "command," but rather "hospitality." Likewise, it is not proper to prohibit things which man dislikes. You cannot say, "Do not eat stones and thorns!", and if you do say it, it is not called a "prohibition."

Therefore commands to do good and prohibitions against evil are not proper unless there be an ego desiring evil. To will the existence of such an ego is to will evil. But God does not approve of evil, or else He would not have commanded the good. In the same way, when a person wants to teach, he desires the ignorance of the pupil. For there can be no teaching without the pupil's ignorance; and to desire something is also to desire that thing's concomitants. However, the teacher does not approve of the pupil's ignorance, or else he would not teach him. Likewise, the physician desires people to be ill, since he desires to practice medicine. For his skill in medicine cannot be manifested unless people are ill. But he does not approve of their illness, or else he would not treat them and heal them. Again the baker desires men to be hungry so that he can exercise his skill and make a living. But he does not approve of their hunger, or else he would not sell bread. . . .

Hence it is realized that God wills evil in one respect, but in another respect He does not. Our opponents say that God does not will evil in any respect whatsoever. But it is

absurd that He should will a thing and not will its concomitants. Now among the concomitants of His commands and prohibitions is this headstrong ego, which desires evil and hates the good by its very nature. Among the concomitants of this ego are all the evils in this world. Had He not willed these evils, He would not have willed the ego. And if He had not willed the ego, then He would not have willed the commands and prohibitions that are directed at the ego. Moreover, had He approved of these evils, He would not have commanded and prohibited the ego. In short, evil is willed, but not for its own sake.

Then our opponents say, "If He wills every good, and if the averting of evil is a good, then He wills to avert evil." But it is impossible to avert evil without the existence of evil.

Or they say, "He wills faith." But faith is impossible except after unbelief. So one of the concomitants of faith is unbelief.

In conclusion, to will evil is only reprehensible when it is willed for its own sake. But when it is willed for the sake of a good, then it is not reprehensible. (F 179–180/ 186–188)

For readers living in the twentieth century and aware of the incredible evil and suffering which man is capable of inflicting upon his fellow men, Rūmī's discussion of good and evil may seem too dry and detached. But Rūmī also looks at this problem from another point of view, which goes to the heart of the "existential dilemma" posed for so many people by the existence of evil and suffering. However, to feel the burning passion in his verses, one has to be thoroughly acquainted with his discussion of man's ultimate Self and the agony and torment which man undergoes because of separation from It. Much of the third part of this work deals with this question. Nevertheless, I shall quote a further answer which Rūmī gives to the problem of evil and suggest that its full import cannot be comprehended until the rest of the book has been read.

Look not at Time's events, which come from the spheres and make life so disagreeable!

Look not at this dearth of daily bread and means of livelihood! Look not at this famine and fear and trembling!

Look at this: In spite of all the world's bitterness, you are passionately and shamelessly attached to it.

> Know that bitter tribulation is a Mercy! Know that the empire of Marv and Balkh is a Vengeance! . . .
>
> The cruelty of Time and of every suffering that exists is easier than distance from God and heedlessness.
>
> For that cruelty will pass, but distance from Him will not. No one possesses good fortune but he who takes to Him an aware spirit. (M VI 1733–36, 56–57)

6. HEEDLESSNESS AND THE EXISTENCE OF THE WORLD

God created the universe to make the Hidden Treasure manifest. Hence He wants the world to exist in order for it to display the unlimited creative potentialities of His Attributes. But for the world to remain in existence, true knowledge of things as they are must be kept from most of its inhabitants. Otherwise they would cease to occupy themselves with activities necessary for the display of the full range of His Attributes. So God desires the existence of certain things which one might not expect; but of course not in themselves, but rather as the concomitants of His ultimate goal in creating the world. For example, God desires that heedlessness and forgetfulness of Him should exist in the world.

In order to maintain the "reign of heedlessness," God veils the eyes of men from the true reality of things. Rūmī sees allusions to God's maintenance of man's ignorance in such Koranic verses as these: "They worked deception, and God worked deception, and God is the best of deceivers" (III 54). "Do they feel secure against God's deception? None feels secure against God's deception save those people who are lost" (VII 99). "God has set a seal upon their hearts and their hearing, and on their eyes is a covering" (II 7). "God is swifter at deception" (X 22).

> This abode is built from heedlessness. Bodies and the world are all maintained through heedlessness. This body has become full grown because of heedlessness. Heedlessness is unbelief, and religion cannot exist without unbelief, since religion is the abandonment of unbelief. Therefore an unbelief must exist for us to abandon. So both religion and unbelief are the same thing, since the first does not exist without the second and the second does not exist without the first. They are indivisible. (F 206–207/215)
>
> Man is like a bow held in the hand of God's Power. God employs him in various tasks. In reality, the agent is God, not the bow. The bow is an instrument and a means. But for the sake of the maintenance of the world it is unaware

and heedless of God. Tremendous indeed is the bow that becomes aware of the Bowman's hand! (F 199/208)

The world is kept standing through heedlessness. If there were no heedlessness, this world would not remain. Yearning for God, recollection of the next world, spiritual intoxication, and ecstacy are the architects of that world. If all these displayed themselves, every one of us would go to that world and not remain here. But God wants us here so that the two worlds may exist. So He has appointed two magistrates, heedlessness and heedfulness, so that both houses may flourish. (F 109/120)

The pillar of this world, oh beloved, is heedlessness: Wakefulness is this world's bane.

Wakefulness comes from that world; when it prevails, this world is laid flat.

Wakefulness is the sun and cupidity the ice, wakefulness water and this world dirt.

A few drops trickle down from that world so that cupidity and envy may not roar too loudly in this world.

If the trickle from the Unseen should increase, neither skills nor failings would remain in the world. (M I 2066–70)

Is there any place our King is not? But His sorcery has blindfolded the viewer.

He blindfolds your eyes such that you see a dustmote at midday, but not the Greatest Sun,

A ship at sea, but not the ocean's waves.

The ship's bobbing tells you about the sea, just as the movement of people tells the blind man that it is daytime.

Have you not read the verse, *God has set a seal . . . ?* (II 7) It is God who sets the seal, and it is He who removes it and *lifts up the coverings* (L 22). (D 2633–37)

How should I deceive Thee and put Thee in my bag? For Thou art the root of all deception and the lamp of every trickster. (D 14316)

Be not secure from God's deception, though you see a hundred good fortunes. If you imagine certainty, rub your eyes.

For God's deception is so swift that your spirit, even if only terrestrial, may perceive itself as celestial. (D 22976–77)

God is full of deception. He will show you beautiful forms, but in their inside lurk evil forms. He does this so that man in his arrogance will not be deluded into thinking, "I have come up with a wonderful idea and task." (F 5/18)

D.

Man

1. THE TRUST

Creation fulfills its ultimate purpose through the prophets and the saints, that is, those who have actualized all the potentialities of the human state. The first of the prophets and the prototype of human perfection is Adam. Rūmī often employs his name, and more commonly the term "Adam-related" (*ādamī*), to mean "man" in the ultimate state of spiritual perfection (in certain other schools of Sufism, the term "Perfect Man" is employed with the same meaning). Hence Rūmī understands Koranic verses and prophetic sayings that mention Adam to refer also to man in the state of perfection.

If Adam is the prototype of human perfection, then the Prophet Muḥammad—who said, "I was a prophet when Adam was between spirit and body"—may be called the "prototype of the prototype."

> "I look at my inmost consciousness and see a universe hidden, Adam and Eve not yet arisen from the world." (M III 4542)

The state of perfection attained by the Prophet is the highest imaginable; all other prophets and the saints are like rays from his sun.

In the Koran, God tells the angels about His creation of Adam with the words, "I am setting in the earth a vicegerent" (II 30). And the Prophet said, "God created Adam in His own form."

> God created us in His own form: Our description has taken instruction from His description. (M IV 1194)

The Forgiving God desired and decided in eternity to reveal and manifest Himself.

But no opposite can be displayed without its own opposite, and that peerless King had no opposite.

So He made a vicegerent, a Possessor of the Heart, to be the mirror of His Kingship.

Then He gave him limitless purity, and produced his opposite from darkness.

He made two banners, white and black: The one was Adam, the other the satan of His way.

Then the strife and war that came to pass between these two great camps came to pass.

In a similar manner, Abel came in the second period: Opposed to his pure light was Cain. . . .

Period after period, generation after generation, the two parties have continued to war. (M VI 2151-57, 62)

Adam in his "limitless purity" became a mirror for God's Attributes. So all knowledge and all things were to be found within his breast. He was the form of God's Meaning, that is, the locus within which all God's Names and Attributes found outward manifestation. It is in the light of this teaching that Rūmī interprets the Koranic verse, "He taught Adam the names, all of them" (II 31).

The father of mankind, who is the lord of *He taught the names*, has hundreds of thousands of sciences in every vein.

His spirit was taught the name of every single thing, exactly as that thing is until its end.

Whatever title He gave never changed. He whom God called "nimble" did not become "slow."

Whoever will be a believer in the end was seen by Adam at the beginning; whoever will become an unbeliever at the end appeared to him. . . .

For us, the "name" of each thing is its outward form; for the Creator, the name of each thing is its inward mystery.

For Moses, the name of his rod was "staff." For the Creator, its name was "serpent." . . .

In short, our "name" with God is really our ultimate end.

He bestows a name on man according to his outcome, not according to that which is but a loan.

Since Adam saw with the Pure Light, the spirit and mystery of the names appeared to him. (M I 1234–37, 39–40, 44–46)

Man was created to be God's vicegerent and was given knowledge of all things. His special position and function in creation are referred to as the "Trust" (*amānat*).

There is one thing in this world which must never be forgotten. If you forget everything else, but not that one thing, then have no fear. But if you perform, remember and do not forget all things, but you forget that, you have done nothing. . . . *We offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to carry it and were afraid of it; and man carried it. Surely he is sinful, very foolish* (XXXIII 72). . . .

We have honored the children of Adam (XVII 70). God did not say, "We have honored the heavens and the earth." So man is able to perform that task which neither the heavens nor the earth nor the mountains can perform. When he performs that task, he will no longer be *sinful, very foolish*.

If you say, "Though I do not perform that task, I perform so many other tasks!"—man was not created for those other tasks. It is just as if you took a priceless sword of Indian steel, like those found in the treasuries of kings, and made of it a cleaver for rotten meat, saying, "I do not let this sword stand idle. I perform so many useful tasks with it!" Or you were to take a golden bowl and cook turnips in it, whereas for a single grain of that gold you could buy a hundred pots. Or you have made a damascene blade into a nail for a broken gourd, saying, "I am making good use of it. I hang the gourd on it. I am not letting this blade stand idle." (F 14–15/26–27)

The uniqueness of man's situation is expressed in a famous saying of God related by the Prophet. Again, although God is addressing the Prophet himself, Rūmī understands the saying to refer to man in the state of spiritual perfection: "But for thee, I would not have created the heavenly spheres." Rūmī interprets the following Koranic verse, also addressed to the Prophet, in a similar manner: "Surely We have given thee abundance" (CVIII, 1).

The heavens are slave to the saint's moon, the east and the west beg bread from him.

"But for thee" is written upon his firman: He bestows and distributes all things.

If he did not exist, the heavens would not revolve, nor would they be the place of light and the station of the angels.

If he did not exist, the seas would not have acquired splendor, fish, and royal pearls.

If he did not exist, the earth would not contain treasures within and jasmine without. (M VI 2102–06)

Hence it is known that Muhammad is the root. "But for thee, I would not have created the heavenly spheres." All things that exist—nobility, humility, high stations—are his bestowal and shadow, for they have become manifest from him. (F 105–106/117)

Stars, clouds, and heavenly spheres; jinn, devils, and angels—after all, oh you who are without certainty, these all exist for the sake of man. (D 9310)

The crown of *We have honored* is upon your head, the collar of *We have given thee abundance* around your neck.

Man is the substance, and the heavens are his accident. All things are branches and steps—he is the goal. . . .

You seek knowledge from books. What a shame! You seek pleasure from sweetmeats. What a shame!

You are an ocean of knowledge hidden in a dew drop, a world concealed in three ells of body.

What are wine, music, or copulation that you should seek delight and profit from them?

A sun seeks to borrow from a dustmote! Venus seeks wine from a jug! (M V 3574–75, 78–81)

Man's bodily senses are infirm, but within him dwells a mighty nature. . . .

Hence that all-accomplished Prophet recited the mystery, "We are the last and the foremost." . . .

So man is in form a branch of the world, but in attribute the world's foundation. Know this!

His outward is made dizzy by a gnat, but his inward encompasses the seven heavens. (M IV 3759, 64, 66–67)

Oh you who have devoted yourself to strife, you have not discerned yourself from others!

Whenever you come upon a form, you stop and say, "I am this." By God, you are not that! . . .

How can you be that? You are that unique one, happy, beautiful, and intoxicated with yourself.

You are your own bird, prey, and snare, your own seat of honor, carpet, and roof.

"Substance" subsists in itself, those things that derive from it are accidents.

If you are born of Adam, sit like him and behold his progeny within yourself.

What does the vat contain that is not in the river? What does the room encompass that is not in the city?

This world is the vat, and the heart the running stream, this world the room, and the heart the city of wonders. (M IV 803–804, 6–11)

Adam is the astrolabe of the Attributes of Exaltation, his description the locus of manifestation for God's signs.

Whatever appears within him is His reflection, like the moon in a stream. (M VI 3138–39)

The Prophet said, "He who knows himself knows his Lord." Just as this copper astrolabe mirrors the heavens, man's existence is God's astrolabe—*We have honored the children of Adam*. When God causes a man to have knowledge of Him and be familiar with Him, moment by moment he observes the theophanies of God and His ineffable Beauty from the astrolabe of his own existence. That Beauty will never be absent from his mirror. (F 10/22)

2. THE GOAL OF CREATION AND THE INTELLECT

If man becomes the mirror for all things, this is because all of God's Attributes, i.e., the archetypes of all of existence, are reflected within him. In other words, through him the Hidden Treasure becomes outwardly manifest in its totality. He is the goal of creation, for through him the Hidden Treasure becomes known. Since he is the goal, he is the "last" thing to enter into existence. All other things are preparations for his coming and means for him to attain to his spiritual perfection. Rūmī invokes the ancient axiom, "The first in thought is the last in actuality." When an architect wants to build a house, his first thought is of the total structure. All the myriad stages of planning and building derive from that first thought and lead to its actualization. Likewise, when a gardener wants to produce fruit, there are many steps, such as tilling the ground, planting the seedling, irrigation, and cultivation, before the fruit may be plucked and eaten. But no doubt the fruit was the origin of the tree, since the tree was only planted for its sake.

God's "thoughts" about creation are contained in His eternal Knowledge, the Hidden Treasure. His "first thought" is the full manifestation of His Attributes through man, for man is nothing but the integral manifestation of the Hidden Treasure. All other "thoughts" are dependent upon and derive from this unitary idea that is the Hidden Treasure as such. But in the course of creation, all the concomitants of the Hidden Treasure must become manifested and deployed before the image of the whole can come into view.

According to the Prophet, "The first thing created by God was the Intellect" and "The first thing created by God was my light." The Universal Intellect is identical with the Muhammadan Light, which is the spiritual reality of the prophets and saints, or of man in his station of perfection. The Universal Intellect knows all things, for it is a direct reflection of God's Knowledge. In other words, it is the Hidden Treasure at the first stage of its outward manifestation. This is why Rūmī and so many other Sufis have said that the whole universe is the outward reflection of man's spiritual reality. The universe is a part of man, even if man appears to be part of the universe.

> Thus you may know that the exalted heavens are the reflection of man's perceptual faculties.
>
> Did not the hand of the Majestic God create first the Intellect, before the two worlds? (M VI 1935–36)
>
> What worlds are enraptured by the Intellect! How wide is the ocean of the Intellect!
>
> In this sweet ocean our forms are running, like cups on top of water.
>
> So long as they remain empty, they stay on top like basins. But once filled, they sink into the water.
>
> Intellect is hidden and a world manifest: Our forms are its waves or drops. (M I 1109–12)
>
> The first thought comes last into actuality: Know that such was the foundation of the world in eternity-without-beginning.
>
> In the heart's thought, fruits are first; in actuality, they are the last to become manifest.
>
> After actualizing the tree by planting it, you will read your first words in the end.
>
> Although the branches, leaves, and roots come first, all of these are sent out for the sake of the fruit.
>
> Hence the mystery that began as the heavens' seed became in the end the lord of "But for thee . . .".
>
> This world is a single thought of the Universal Intellect; the Intellect is like the king and forms are its messengers. (M II 970–74, 78)

Actualize the Prophet's words, "We are the last and the foremost," oh charming man! The fresh fruit is prior to the tree.

Although the fruit comes last into existence, it is first, for it was the goal. (M III 1128–29)

In outward form, the orchard comes first, but in reality the fruit was first: Thou art always sending the first substance last. (D 31421)

The pure, starlike spirits replenish the stars of the heavens.

The outward form of these stars maintains our world, but our inward reality maintains the heavens.

So you are the microcosm in form, the macrocosm in meaning.

The outward form of the branch is the origin of the fruit; but inwardly, the branch came into existence for the fruit's sake.

If there had been no desire and hope for the fruit, why did the gardener plant the tree?

Therefore in meaning the fruit gave existence to the tree, even if in form the tree gave birth to the fruit.

That is why Muhammad said, "Adam and the prophets are behind me under my banner."

That is why the Prophet, possessor of a myriad virtues, spoke the mystery, "We are the last and the foremost":

"Although in form I am born of Adam, in meaning I am the ancestor of my ancestor.

For the angels prostrated themselves to him for my sake, and he followed me to the seventh heaven.

So in meaning, the first father was born from me; in meaning the fruit gave birth to the tree."

The first thought comes last into actuality: especially the thought that is the Attribute of Eternity-without-beginning. (M IV 519–530)

Those people who say that the world is eternal—how can their words be taken seriously? Others say that the world has come into existence. These are the saints and the prophets, who are more ancient than the world. God placed the request for the world's creation within their spirits, and only then did the world become manifest. So they know for a fact that the world has an origin: They are only giving news of their own station. For example, we who are sitting in this house, our age is sixty or seventy. We saw that there was no house, and then a few years ago this house came into existence. If certain living creatures are born in the walls and

> doors of the house, like scorpions, mice, snakes, and the tiny animals that live here, they see when they are born that the house is already built. If they should say that the house is eternal, for us that is no proof, for we saw that this house came into existence. Just as these animals that have grown up in the walls and doors of this house have never gained knowledge of or seen anything apart from it, so those people who have grown up in the house of this world have no substance. Here they have sprouted up, and here they will return to the earth. If they say that the world is eternal, that cannot be proof for the prophets and saints, for they existed a hundred thousand million years before the world. Why speak of years? What place is this for years and numbers? For that is infinite and beyond reckon. They saw this world come into existence, just as you saw this house come into existence. (F 140–141/149–150)

3. THE COVENANT OF ALAST

The Trust was not imposed upon man. When the Koran says that man "carried" the Trust, the meaning is that he accepted it with full knowledge of the responsibility involved. This is indicated explicitly by another famous Koranic verse: "(Remember) when thy Lord took from the loins of the children of Adam their progeny and made them testify about themselves: 'Am I not (*alast*) your Lord?' They said, 'Yea! We testify!'—lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, 'As for us, we were heedless of this'" (VII 172). This "event", called the "Covenant of Alast," took place before man entered into this world, when he existed as a disembodied spirit in proximity to God.

> We are in this courtroom world, presided over by the Judge who issues decrees, for the sake of the litigation between *Am I not?* and *Yea*.
>
> For we said *Yea*, and in our trial our actions and words are testimony and evidence.
>
> Why do we keep silence in the court of the Judge? Did we not come in the first place to give witness? . . .
>
> Whether in a hundred years, or in a moment, discharge this Trust and be delivered. (M V 174–176, 82)
>
> What is this testimony? To make the hidden manifest, whether through words, deeds, or something else.
>
> For the goal is to make manifest the hidden secret of your substance: Its attribute will remain, but these accidents will pass. . . .

This prayer, spiritual warfare, and fasting do not remain: The spirit remains with a good name. (M V 246–247, 49)

On the Day of Alast the Beloved said something else, but in a whisper. Do any of you remember?

He said, "I have hurried to you, I have made you for Myself. I will not sell what I have made for Myself at auction."

I said, "Who art Thou?" He said, "The Desire of all." I said, "Who am I?" He said, "The desire of the Desire." (D 9265–67)

So man is the goal of creation. He has come into this world to display those Attributes of God that are reflected within himself, or in other words, to play his own part in revealing the Hidden Treasure. At the same time he is being tested: Does he remember the Covenant of Alast? Does he understand and acknowledge that he is displaying God's Treasure, not his own? The idea of the Covenant thus combines the purely metaphysicial perspective of the manifestation and theophany of God's Attributes with the more religious and moral perspective of man's awareness and responsibility of his duties toward his Creator.

In the following verses Rūmī shows the connection between Alast and the manifestation of the Attributes of Gentleness and Severity.

Which will overcome, Mercy or Wrath? Which will overcome, the springs of Paradise or the fires of Hell?

Since the Covenant of Alast, both branches—forbearance and anger—have existed to attract men to themselves.

That is why both negation and affirmation are contained in the single word "Alast" ("Am I not?").

For this word is affirmative through its interrogative form, but "not" is buried within it. (M V 2123–26)

Originally man's spirit dwelt with God in a state of oneness with all other spirits and the angels. Having accepted the Trust, man's spirit was given a body in this world. As we have already seen, in one respect the body is utterly opposed to the spirit, but in another respect it is the spirit's reflection or shadow. For the world of creation derives all its existence from the world of the command. Hence Rūmī calls the body "the shadow of the shadow of the shadow of the heart" (M VI 3307).

The spirit of God's lover exists in No-place, while this body of his is the shadow of Alast. The spirit-sun is dancing, and this body is stamping its feet. (D 25013)

Having entered into this world, the spirit forgot its original home and its covenant with God. Man identifies himself with his ego and is unaware of the ocean of the spirit that lies just below the foam of his awareness. If man can pass beyond the veil of his own ego, his spirit can rejoin its original state of purity and unity.

The body did not exist and I was a spirit with Thee in heaven; between us was none of my speaking and listening. (D 19132)

Without composition and one in substance, we were all on yonder side, headless and footless.

Like the sun we were one substance, like water we were pure and without ripples.

When that pure light entered into form, multiplicity appeared like the shadow of a battlement. (M I 686–688)

In that *Am I not* and *Yea*, you were a spirit without body. At that time you saw you were that. Why are you worried now about this? (D 32620)

Before you were this body, you were a pure spirit. How long will you keep yourself separate from that?

You are a pure spirit in the midst of black earth. I will say nothing—do *you* consider it proper?

You cannot discern yourself from your cloak—for you have put on a cloak of water and clay. (D 33704–06)

Before this the spirits were upon the spheres, drinking from the same cup as the angels. My spirit is clapping its hands, since Thou art pulling it back to the same place. (D 35818)

The birds of consciousness have descended from the heavens and become tied to the earth for two or three days.

They were sent from the spheres—though they are the stars in religion's heaven—

To realize the worth of union with God and to see the pain of separation from Him. (D 7192–94)

This world came first of necessity, so that you can realize the worth of the realm of Alast. (M V 600)

Like fish we say to the Ocean of Life, "Why didst Thou send up waves and throw us onto the driness of water and clay? Thou possessest such mercy, why didst Thou

give us such torment? Oh, Thy mercilessness is sweeter than the mercy of all the merciful creatures of the world!"

The Ocean replies, "I was a Hidden Treasure, so I wanted to be known": "I was a treasure, concealed behind the curtain of the Unseen, hidden in the retreat of No-place. I wanted My Beauty and Majesty to be known through the veils of existence. I wanted everyone to see what sort of Water of Life and Alchemy of Happiness I am."

The fish answer, "We who are fish in this sea, from the first we swam in this Ocean of Life. We knew its Tremendousness and Gentleness, for we are the copper that receives the elixir of this ultimate Alchemy. We knew the mightiness of this elixir of Life. As much as we spoke of it to those who are not fish of this sea, they did not listen, see, or understand. From the first we were the knowers of this Treasure, and at the last we will know it. So at whom didst Thou direct such a long exile for the sake of 'I wanted to be known.'"

The answer comes, "Oh fish! True enough, a fish knows the water's worth, loves the sea, and clings to union with it. But his love is not of the same kind, so hot and burning, with such self-abandonment, with such lamentation and weeping of blood, and with such roasting of the liver, as the love of that fish who has been thrown upon dry land by the waves and for a long time struggles and tosses upon the hot earth and burning sand. *He shall neither die therein, nor live* (LXXXVII 13). Separation from the Ocean allows him no taste of life's sweetness—after all, that is separation from the Ocean of Life. How should someone who has seen that Ocean find joy in this life?" (MS 29)

The sunlight of the spirits became divided within the windows, the bodies.

When you look at the sun's disc, indeed it is one. But he who is veiled by the bodies is in doubt. (M II 186–187)

The spirits of wolves and dogs are separate, every one, but the spirits of God's lions are united.

I refer to their spirits by a plural noun because that one spirit is a hundred in relation to bodies.

In the same way the light of heaven's sun is a hundred in relation to the courtyards of houses.

But all their lights are one when you remove the walls from between.

> When the bodily houses have lost their foundations the believers become like a "single soul." (M IV 414–418).

In this last passage Rūmī is commenting upon a saying of the Prophet: "The believers are brothers, and the men of knowledge are like a single soul." But his remarks on the original unity of the human spirit before its manifestation in the world can just as well be taken as a commentary on any one of a number of Koranic verses to which he sometimes refers. For example,

> In the eye of realized discernment we are all a single soul: *Your creation and your upraising are as but a single soul* (XXXI 28). The more a part is wounded, the more aware it is of this unity, so it takes on the color of peace, not war.[20] (MK 8: 15/52)

4. THE DESCENT AND REASCENT OF THE SPIRIT

Rūmī subscribed to the traditional Islamic cosmology, since it was an adequate representation of his own physical observations and mystical experience, and it provided an excellent symbolical vehicle for expressing his metaphysical knowledge. According to this cosmology, the world consists of nine concentric spheres surrounding their center, the earth. These spheres can be "seen" by studying the sky and the movements of the planets. Much more important, the ascending spheres correspond to the ascending stages of the spiritual journey. The Prophet himself described the lower parts of his *mi'rāj* or journey to God in terms of the traditional concentric spheres.

We have already alluded to the hierarchical structure of reality: the physical or visible world, then the spiritual world, then God. In fact, the Sufis all employ terms which describe a far greater complexity. These three levels provide only a rough outline. According to the Prophet, there are "700" or "70,000" veils of light and darkness separating man from God, and Sufis usually understand these veils to refer to ontological degrees. Rūmī sometimes refers to the "18,000 worlds," which apparently lie on the same level of existence, but which may allude to a vertical hierarchy.[21] He also refers to the 100,000 stages of the spirit, which certainly are arranged in ascending degrees.

Some of Rūmī's teachings cannot be put into context without reference to this hierarchical structure of reality. If certain authors had meditated a little more thoroughly upon Rūmī's picture of the cosmos, which is referred to throughout his works, they never would have claimed that his ideas prefigure the theory of biological evolution.

The spirit can only ascend to heaven because it has come down from heaven in the first place. The stages of its ascent correspond to the stages of its descent. Hence a definite parallelism can be understood between the following two verses:

> Such attractions have pulled us from the City of the Spirit across 100,000 way-stations to this ephemeral world. (D 2217)
>
> On the night of the *mi'rāj*, the Prophet in his selflessness traveled a 100,000 year journey. (D 31027)

Different schools of Islamic thought describe the structure of the universe in differing terms, but there are no fundamental discrepancies. Although Rūmī does not discuss this subject *per se*, he refers to it in passing repeatedly. From his references one may suggest that he would not find anything wrong with the following description: The outermost edge of the "visible world" is the ninth or starless heaven, sometimes referred to as God's "Throne" (*'arsh*). Beyond the visible world is the spiritual world, the world of the command. The eight remaining heavens in descending order are those of (8) the fixed stars, sometimes called God's "Footstool" (*kursī*), (7) Saturn, (6) Jupiter, (5) Mars, (4) the sun, (3) Venus, (2) Mercury, and (1) the moon.

Although the nine spheres are said to pertain to the visible world, in reality this signifies that the visible heavens are the outward manifestation of the spiritual degrees of the world of the command. If we do not accept this interpretation, we cannot explain why the spheres are populated by spiritual beings, i.e., the angels, and why the Prophet alluded to each of the heavens as the "abode" of a particular prophet. Thus, for example, because of the Prophet's words, it is common in Persian poetry for Jesus to be placed in the fourth heaven. But obviously, such an eminent possessor of the spirit of sanctity must dwell within the spiritual world.[22]

> When Jesus found the ladder of God's light, he hastened to the top of the fourth dome. (M II 920)
>
> Since Jesus has gone to the fourth heaven, what need has he for the church? (D 1283)
>
> I am not tied to this house, for like Jesus I have a house upon the fourth heaven. (D 18388)
>
> From now on let me sit with Jesus on top of the fourth heaven! (M I 649)
>
> Muḥammad has returned from the *mi'rāj*! Jesus has arrived from the fourth sphere! (D 3685)

Within the confines of the last heavenly sphere, that of the moon, are found the spheres of the four elements: fire, air, water, and earth. As pointed out above, the four elements are still beyond the plane of purely material manifestation, since they cannot exist alone in their pure state within this world of opposition. The revolution of the spheres brings about the mixture of the elements. In other words, everything that occurs on the elemental and material plane derives from the heavens, which represent the higher ontological levels. From the four elements are produced the three kingdoms of the elemental world: minerals, plants, and animals.

According to this cosmological scheme, the spirit must travel through all the descending levels of the universe in its journey from the abode of Alast to manifestation in this world as a body. From another point of view, this means that the spirit remains as a spirit in its own abode of light, but becomes outwardly manifested through a series of ever darker shadows until the darkest shadow, the physical body, makes its appearance.

According to Rūmī's teachings, the spirit must manifest itself as each of the four elements and only then enter into the three kingdoms. When it appears within the world in the form of a mineral, it begins its return to its own world. Through successive stages it is transformed from mineral to plant, to animal, and finally to man. When it assumes the form of a human being, the spirit is ready to begin disengaging itself from the material world. At first its consciousness is at the level of the animal spirit or ego. All of the directives of religion and the spiritual life are aimed at releasing it from this prison and taking it back to its original home.[23]

It must be emphasized that this scheme does not describe some sort of physical descent and reascent of the spirit. In the higher stages, this is self-evident, for in itself the spirit transcends the material world. But even when Rūmī says that the spirit "enters into" the world of the elements, this is only a manner of speaking. The spirit is always transcendent, dwelling in its original home. If we speak of a "descent," it is because the spirit is a "meaning" which brings about the manifestation of the outward "forms" of existence which it embraces within itself. The world of "creation" is derived from and depends totally upon the world of the "command": The physical world is but the shadow or reflection of the spiritual world.

The human spirit embraces within itself innumerable possibilities of outward manifestation. It can throw down uncountable shadows or forms. Since "Adam was taught the names," the meanings of all things are contained within man's spirit. And each of these meanings can become manifested as a corresponding form. But this does not take place haphazardly; rather, there is a successive manifestation of ontological possibilities that becomes in this world a temporal succession

of forms. These forms are the different levels of manifestation and outward existence through which the spirit "travels." But in fact, the spirit remains at its own ontological level, and only its forms descend and reascend.

When man enters the spiritual path, he is gradually able to free his spirit from the confines of the ego. Hence the spirit sets out acquiring the knowledge, awareness, and "beauty" or virtues pertaining to the human state. The spirit ascends through the levels represented by the human and angelic spirits and ultimately may attain the level of the "spirit of sanctity." Symbolically, the journey through the human and angelic spirits is represented as an ascent by means of the ladder of the heavens, the very road by which the spirit had descended in the first place. In Islamic cosmology, the "Lote Tree of the Far Boundary"—beyond which Gabriel was not able to ascend during the Prophet's *mi'rāj* and which marks the upper limit of the angelic spirit—is situated in the seventh heaven, that is, immediately below the Footstool. When Rūmī speaks of the "roof of the heavens," he is referring to a station at this level or beyond.

> The moon traverses the constellations of the zodiac in a single night, so why do you deny the *mi'rāj*?
>
> That wondrous, unique pearl (the Prophet) is like a hundred moons—for when he made one gesture, the moon was split in two.
>
> And the marvel that he displayed in splitting the moon was in keeping with the weakness of the creatures' perception.
>
> The work and business of the prophets and messengers is beyond the spheres and the stars.
>
> Transcend the spheres and their revolution! Then you will see that work and business. (M VI 3444–48)
>
> The eye of the heart knows what it has seen through His collyrium: light and mercy, all the way to the seventh heaven.
>
> Indeed, what are the seven heavens for that eye? Like seven rungs of a ladder. (D 21214–15)
>
> All of created existence is drunk with the heart, a plaything in its hand. Without doubt the nine levels of the spheres are but two steps for the heart. (D 14134)

Having transcended all the levels of physical and spiritual existence, the spirit rejoins the divine Command from which it arose. But now it has actualized and maintains a conscious awareness of every stage and degree of the descending and ascending levels of existence.

The ascent or *mi'rāj* of the spirit may be said to begin with the human embryo. Hence Rūmī refers to the *mi'rāj* of the embryo to the stage of intelligence. As the embryo develops, it traverses all the stages of physical existence. For at the beginning, it is like a mineral in that it does not possess any of the outward perfections of life. As it gradually develops, it recapitulates the levels of increasing complexity among living creatures. First it acquires the vegetative faculties of growth and feeding. And by the time it enters into the world, the infant possesses all the animal faculties, such as volitive motion, desire, passion, anger, and comprehension. As the child grows, these faculties are perfected. Gradually various human perfections related to intelligence and the virtues are added to them. The spiritual life opens the door to still higher levels of perfection.

From another point of view, Rūmī also points out that inanimate things—which have descended through the same stages, from the Attributes to the world of dust—also find their *mi'rāj* through man. For man ingests them and integrates them into himself, and ultimately they are transformed into spirit.

If I have entered into great detail explaining this dimension of Rūmī's teachings, it is because of the misunderstandings alluded to above, which seem to have gained widespread acceptance. But in fact, this discussion of the spirit's descent and reascent does not play a very important role in Rūmī's teachings. For it is not his aim to explain a cosmological scheme to his readers. On the contrary, it is obvious from the way this theory is presented that Rūmī assumes his readers are familiar with it, just as a modern poet might assume that his readers know that the sun is the center of the solar system. In Rūmī's works this whole discussion only serves to illustrate the moral he wishes to draw: The constant transformations which man undergoes—represented so graphically by his growth from "mineral existence" through the stages of childhood and immaturity to the station of adulthood—only serve to draw him onward to higher levels of spiritual existence. Every time man "dies" in relation to one state, he is "reborn" into a higher state. Hence he should never fear the trials and tribulations of the spiritual path, which represent so many deaths in relation to the false life of the world and the ego. For the death of one thing is always the rebirth of something better and higher.

Rūmī's teachings on many of these points are inspired directly by the Koran. For example, a number of verses refer to the stages of the growth of a sperm drop in the womb, such as the following:

> We created man of an extraction of clay, then We set him, a drop, in a receptacle secure, then We created of the drop a clot, then We created of the clot a tissue, then We created of the tissue bones, then We garmented the bones in

flesh; thereafter We produced him as another creature. (XXIII 12–14)

The manner in which Rūmī comments on this teaching to draw a clear moral can be seen plainly in the first selection below, drawn from one of his letters.

May He who brought all the causes of the East and the West into existence cause us to meet again. For He provided causes to make us from a drop of sperm. It had neither ears, nor awareness, nor intellect, nor eyes, neither the attribute of kingliness nor that of servanthood; it knew neither heartache nor joy, neither abasement nor greatness. He gave that unaware drop a home in the womb and made it into blood through a subtle process. Then He coagulated and congealed that blood and, in that private house, made it into new flesh without head or organ. He opened the door of the mouth, the eyes, and the ears. He provided a tongue and then, behind the mouth, the treasury of the breast. Within it He placed the heart, which is both a drop and a world, a pearl and an ocean, a servant and a king. Whose intellect could have comprehended that He would bring us forth from that lowly and unaware region to this one? God says, "You have seen and heard from whence to where I have brought you. Now I tell you that I will take you out from this earth and heaven to an earth finer than raw silver and a heaven that cannot be contained in imagination or description because of its spirit-augmenting power and subtlety. The revolution of that heaven makes no young man decrepit or new thing old; nothing rots or decays, nothing dies; no person awake ever sleeps, since sleep is for the sake of rest and the expulsion of fatigue, but there no fatigue exists, nor any weariness."

If you do not believe God's words, then think about that drop of sperm: Suppose you had said to it, "God possesses a world outside of this darkness, within which are a heaven, a sun and a moon, countries, cities, and gardens. In it are His servants, some of whom are kings; some are wealthy, some healthy, some afflicted and blind. So fear how you leave this dark house, oh drop of sperm! Which one will you be?" That sperm drop's imagination and intellect would not have believed this story. How could it accept that other than darkness and bloody nourishment another world and food exist? So be sure that it would be heedless and deny. Yet it could not escape. It would be pulled and dragged outside. (MK 39: 43–44/99)

For a time you were the four elements, for a time an animal. Now you have been a spirit, so become the Beloved! Become the Beloved! (D 22561)

The root of bounties descended from heaven to the earth and became the food of the pure spirit.

When it came down from heaven in humility, it became a part of a brave and living man.

Hence that inanimate thing became human attributes, it flew joyfully above the Throne.

It says, "From the first we came from the World of Life. We have returned to the heights from the depths."

All parts, whether moving or still, are reciting, *To Him we return* (II 156). (M III 460–464)

When a mineral turns its face toward the plant kingdom, life grows up from the tree of its good fortune.

Every plant that turns toward the spirit drinks from the fountain of life, like Khiḍr.

Then when the spirit turns toward the Beloved, it spreads its bedroll in everlasting life. (M VI 126–128)

Oh traveler, set not your heart upon a way-station, lest you be wounded when you are drawn back to Him.

For you have passed over many a way-station from the time of the embryo to the days of your youth. (D 3324–25)

You cannot pull a camel away from a thicket without effort. When have you left dust easily, oh spirit?

In a hundred places you have turned sour, saying, "I will not leave this place." I have pulled you by the ear as far as the human substance. . . .

Why do you wear a black pot? You are looking for stew. Where is the glory of *We have honored* (XVII 70)? Where is a king's aspiration? . . .

Look at these elemental and vegetative parts that you have accompanied, shriveled within themselves!

I will pull them, like you, from that place to this. And beyond this way-station lie a hundred way-stations of the spirit. (D 27625–26, 28, 32–33)

Why should it be surprizing that the spirit does not remember its previous abodes, wherein it resided beforehand and was born?

For this world, like a dream, covers over all things, as clouds veil the stars,

Especially since the spirit has trodden so many cities, and the dust has not yet been swept away from its perception.

It has not made heated efforts to purify the heart so that it may contemplate all that has happened

And gaze through the aperture of mystery, beholding the beginning and end with open eye.

Man came first to the realm of the minerals, and from them he fell in among the plants.

For years he lived among the plants and remembered nothing of the minerals because of strife.

When he left the plants and joined the animals, he remembered nothing of the vegetative state,

Save only the inclination he feels towards it, especially at the time of spring and fragrant herbs. . . .

Then that Creator whom you know kept on pulling him from animality to humanity.

In the same way he passed from realm to realm, until now he is intelligent, knowledgeable, and strong.

He remembers not his first intellects, and he will leave this present intellect behind—

He will be delivered from this intellect full of avarice and cupidity and see hundreds of thousands of marvellous intellects. (M IV 3632–40, 46–49)

I died from the mineral kingdom and became a plant; I died to vegetative nature and attained to animality.

I died to animality and became a man. So why should I fear? When did I ever become less through dying?

Next time I will die to human nature, so that I may spread my wings and lift up my head among the angels. . . .

Once again, I will be sacrificed from angelic nature and become that which enters not the imagination. (M III 3901–03, 05)

From the day you entered into existence, you were fire, or air, or earth.

If you had remained in that state, how could you have reached this elevation?

The first existence you received from the Transmuter did not remain: He set a better existence in its place.

So it continued for hundreds of thousands of existences, one after the other, the second always better than the first. . . .

You have gained these subsistences through annihilations. Why have you turned your face away from annihilation? . . .

You have seen hundreds of thousands of resurrections, oh recalcitrant man, from the beginning of your existence until now. . . .

Come, oh crow, give up this spirit! Be a falcon! Sacrifice yourself before God's transmuting power! (M V 789–792, 796, 799, 808)

If you enter the ranks of those who ascend on the *mi'rāj*, nonexistence, like Burāq,[24] will carry you up—

Not like the *mi'rāj* of an earthly being to the moon, but like the *mi'rāj* of cane to sugar;

Not like the *mi'rāj* of vapor to the sky, but like the *mi'rāj* of an embryo to intelligence.

The Burāq of nonexistence is a wonderful steed for the ascent! If you become nonexistent, it will take you to true existence. (M IV 552–555)

Look at the chickpeas in the pot, how they keep on jumping up, driven by the fire.

At every instant the chickpeas boil up to the top and let out a hundred cries:

"Why are you tormenting us with fire? Since you showed your appreciation for us by buying us, why do you treat us with contempt?"

The housewife keeps stirring with the ladle: "Now, now! Boil sweetly and do not jump back from the one that made the fire.

I do not cook you because I dislike you: I want you to gain taste and savor.

You will become food and then mix with the spirit. You do not suffer tribulation because you are despicable.

Fresh and succulent, you used to drink water in the garden; your water-drinking was for the sake of this fire."

His Mercy is prior to His Wrath, so that Mercy may make the creatures worthy for tribulation.

His Mercy was prior to His Severity so that they could acquire a stock-in-trade: existence.

For without pleasure, flesh and skin do not grow. If they do not grow, what can love for the Friend waste away?

So if Severities come and you must offer up your stock-in-trade,

Gentleness will come again, asking forgiveness: "Now you have purified yourself and jumped across the stream to safety."

She says, "Oh chickpeas! You fed in the spring pasture, and now suffering has come as your guest. Receive it well,

So that the guest may return in gratitude and tell of your generosity before the King.

Then in place of benefits, the Benefactor will come; all benefits will envy you.

I am Abraham, you are my son. Place your head before the knife: *I saw in a dream that I must sacrifice you* (XXXVII 102)

Place your head before Severity with your heart at ease, so that I may cut your throat like Ishmael's.

I will cut off your head, although it is a head delivered from cutting and dying.

But God's desire is that you should submit yourself: Oh Moslem, seek to submit yourself to Him!

Oh chickpeas, boil in tribulation, so that neither your existence nor your selfhood may remain.

Although you were laughing in that garden, you are the rose of the garden of the Spirit and the Eye.

If you have become separated from the garden of water and clay and have turned into a morsel, yet you will enter among the living.

Become food, strength and thought! You used to be a lion—become (once again) a lion in the thicket!

By God, you were born from His Attributes in the first place: Now return to His Attributes, nimble and quick!

You came from the clouds, the sun, and the sky; again you became Attributes and went to the top of the sky.

You came in the form of rain and sunlight. You will go into the Attributes of the All-Gracious.

You were part of the sun, clouds, and the stars; you became ego, acts, words, and thoughts.

When the plant died, animal existence came. Ḥallāj's words were put into effect: 'Kill me, my faithful friends!'[25]

Since so much can be won through death, his words are true: 'In my slaughter is my life.'

Your acts, words, and sincerity became the food of the angel so that through them he traveled a *mi'rāj* toward the heavens,

Just as that morsel became the food of man; it came out of inanimateness and gained life. . . .

If I speak bitter words to you, it is only to wash you clean of all bitterness. . . .

Once your heart has become full of blood because of bitter tribulation, you will go outside of all bitter things. . . ."

The chickpeas say, "Since this is the case, oh lady, let me boil happily—aid me well!

In this boiling, you are like my architect. Strike me with the spoon, for you strike delightfully!

I am like an elephant: beat me upon the head with blows, so that I will not dream of India and gardens,

So that I will give myself to the boiling and be delivered to the embrace of the Beloved."

For in self-sufficiency man becomes rebellious; he becomes disobedient like a dreaming elephant.

When the elephant dreams of India, he does not listen to the mahout, but acts with treachery.

The lady says to the chickpeas, "Before this, like you I was a part of the earth.

When I tasted the fire of spiritual warfare, I became receptive and worthy.

For a period I was boiling in Time, for another period in the pot of the body.

Through these two boilings I became strength to the senses; I became spirit and then your guide.

In the inanimate state I said to myself, 'You are running forward to become knowledge and attributes of meaning.'

When I became spirit I said, 'So boil for some time longer, pass beyond animality.'"

Ask God to protect you from slipping because of these subtle points, and to aid you in reaching the goal!

Many people have gone astray because of the Koran: With that saving rope, one group fell into the well.

The rope has no sin, oh quarrelsome man! But you are unconcerned with traveling upward. (M III 4159–89, 93, 95, 197–211)

5. ADAM AND IBLIS

The Koranic story of Adam and the devil, or "Iblis" as he is usually called in Islamic sources, is rich in imagery and symbolism, of which Rūmī takes full advantage. Acquaintance with the story facilitates an

understanding of many of Rūmī's discussions of man's spiritual development and the obstacles he faces upon his path, just as the Koranic statement that Adam was "taught the names" provides a firm basis for many of Rūmī's teachings concerning man's original and ultimate state.

In the Koran God addresses humanity as follows:

> We created you, then We shaped you, then We said to the angels: "Bow yourselves to Adam." So they bowed themselves, save Iblis. He was not of those that bowed themselves. Said He, "What prevented thee to bow thyself when I commanded thee?" Said he, "I am better than he; Thou createdst me of fire, and him Thou createdst of clay." (VII 11–12)

Rūmī points out a number of lessons to be learned from these and similar Koranic verses. For example, they confirm Adam's exalted spiritual station; they show that Iblis' sin derives fundamentally from spiritual blindness, or the inability to see meaning beyond form; and his words prefigure several of mankind's basic sins, especially pride, envy, and disobedience.

> Of Adam, who was peerless and unequalled, the eye of Iblis saw naught but clay. (M III 2759)
>
> When the angels prostrated themselves to him, Adam said to that one who saw only the outward, "Simpleton! Do you consider it proper that I be but a tiny body?" (D 15122)
>
> Within the cowlike body is a prince, a treasure placed in the ruins,
>
> So that an old ass—I mean Iblis—would flee from that priceless jewel and see only the cow, not the king. (M VI 3581–82)
>
> Iblis saw things separately: He thought that we are apart from God. (D 16532)
>
> Do not gaze upon Adam's water and clay, like Iblis: Behold a hundred thousand rosegardens behind that clay! (D 18226)
>
> With both eyes, see the beginning and the end! Beware! Be not one-eyed, like the accursed Iblis! (M IV 1709)
>
> Close your Iblis-like eye for a moment. After all, how long will you gaze upon form? How long? How long? (M III 2300)
>
> For hundreds of thousands of years the accursed Iblis was a saint and the prince of believers,

But then in his pride he traded punches with Adam and was disgraced like dung at daybreak. (M I 3296–97)

This man is like Iblis, for his pride and blind imitation make him disdain service to the saint. He says, "God is sufficient as an object of my prostration."

Adam answers him, "This prostration is to Him. You see two because you have gone astray and denied."

The dust of the envier's protests causes a curtain to descend between the star of good fortune and his eyes. . . .

Oh God, envy is such a veil between two friends! Yesterday they were like a single spirit, today they are headstrong wolves!

What a veil! For Iblis before this veil used to traverse the roof of the heavens and the earth in prostration. . . .

Envy's veil has made him into an ass on ice. He has polluted all his wings and feathers with this filth.

God drove him from the mosque of the spheres: "Go, you have become filthy!" But he would not listen to His words and kept trying to remove the filth:

"Why should I go? By what proof? What have I done? What is the reason? Come, let us debate, oh unique and loving God!

If there was an evil, Thou hast done it, for all are Thy Acts: the error of idolatry and that of the Christians and Jews.

Since Thou hast made me go astray, it was Thy desire. When I am finished, Thou wilt not see a single praiseworthy creature!" (D 9605–07, 10–11, 13–17)

When Iblis was sent down out of heaven, he said to God, "My Lord, for Thy leading me astray I shall adorn the path of error for them in the earth" (Koran XV 39). In contrast, when Adam and Eve were sent out from Paradise, they said, "Lord, we have wronged ourselves!" (VII 23).

Satan said, *For Thy leading me astray*. The base devil hid his own act.

Adam said, *We have wronged ourselves*. He was not, like us, heedless of God's Acts,

But out of courtesy, he concealed His Act in the sin. By attributing the sin to himself he reaped fruit.

After Adam's repentence God said to him, "Oh Adam, did I not create that sin and trial within you?

Was that not My destiny and decree? How is it that when asking forgiveness you kept this fact hidden?"

Adam said, "I feared lest I be discourteous." God replied, "I also have observed courtesy toward you."

Whoever brings respect receives it. Whoever brings sugar eats almond candy. (M I 1488–94)

When Adam sinned, God exiled him from Paradise. God said to him, "Oh Adam! Since I have held you responsible and punished you for that sin you committed, why did you not dispute with Me? After all, you had an argument. You could have said, 'All is from Thee, and Thou makest all. Whatever Thou desirest in the world comes to pass, and whatever Thou doest not desire will never come to pass.' After all, you had such a clear, correct and patent argument. Why did you not give expression to it?" Adam replied, "I knew that, but I did not abandon courtesy in Thy Presence; love for Thee did not allow me to reproach Thee." (F 102/113)

Adam lapsed because of his stomach and sexual passion, Iblis because of pride and ambition.

Hence Adam quickly asked forgiveness, but that accursed one was too proud to repent. (M V 520–521)

Adam's lapse was a borrowed thing, so he repented at once,

But Iblis' sin was innate, so he could not find the way to precious repentence. (M IV 3414–15)

Those who are the elect of Adam's children breathe the breath of *We have wronged ourselves.*

Display your need for God—do not argue like the impudent and accursed Iblis. (M IV 347–348)

6. MAN'S PLACE AMONG THE CREATURES

The Prophet divided the creatures into a number of categories. Rūmī quotes him as follows:

> God the Most High created the angels and placed within them the intellect, He created the beasts and placed within them sensuality, and He created the children of Adam and placed within them both intellect and sensuality. So he whose intellect dominates his sensuality is higher than the angels, and he whose sensuality dominates his intellect is lower than the beasts. (M IV between 1496 and 97)

This saying delineates three basic kinds of creatures: angels, men, and beasts; and three basic kinds of men: angelic men, "ordinary" men,

and bestial men. The first kind of men are the prophets and saints; the second kind are the majority of humanity, or the "common believers," within whom faith and unbelief are at odds; and the third kind are the unbelievers or followers of Satan.

> The creatures are of three kinds. First there are the angels, who are sheer Intellect. Obedience, servanthood, and remembrance of God are their nature and their food. They eat these things and live these things. They are like fish in water: Their life is from water, their couch and their pillow are of water. Such things as obedience are not prescribed for the angels, since they are pure and free of sensuality. So what favor have they done if they indulge not in sensuality or have not the desires of self-will and the ego? They are pure of these things, so they do not engage in spiritual warfare. If they obey, that is not considered "obedience," since that is their nature. They can do nothing else.
>
> Second are the beasts, who are pure sensuality and have no intellect to hold them back. They too are given no religious prescriptions.
>
> There remains poor man, who is compounded of intellect and sensuality. He is half angel and half beast; half snake and half fish. His fish pulls him toward water, and his snake pulls him toward dry land. He is engaged in strife and war. "He whose intellect dominates his sensuality is higher than the angels, and he whose sensuality dominates his intellect is lower than the beasts."
>
> > The angel was delivered through knowledge and the beast through ignorance. The sons of men remain struggling in between.
>
> Now some men have followed the intellect to such an extent that they have become totally angels and sheer light. They are the prophets and saints. . . .
>
> In some men sensuality has dominated their intellects, so that they have totally assumed the properties of animals.
>
> And some men have remained struggling. They are that group who feel inside themselves a suffering, a pain, a distress, a longing. They are not satisfied with their lives. These are the believers. The saints are waiting to bring the believers into their own houses and make them like themselves. And the satans are also waiting to drag them down toward themselves to the *lowest of the low* (XCV 5). (F 77–78/89–90)

The saying that there is an evil in man's ego not found in the animals and wild beasts does not mean that man is worse than they. It means that the evil character, the wickedness of the ego, and the vileness in man are such in relation to the hidden substance within him, a substance that is veiled by those character traits, vices, and evils. (F 234/241)

The situation of man is as if they brought an angel's wing and attached it to an ass's tail, so that perhaps that ass, through the radiance and companionship of the angel, may itself become an angel. (F 107/118)

The situation of the prophets and saints and of other men, both good and evil, in respect to their degrees and their substance may be set forth in a parable: They bring boys as slaves from the lands of the unbelievers into the Moslem realm and sell them. Some are brought at five years of age, some at ten, and some at fifteen. After those who were brought as infants are nurtured for long years among the Moslems and become old, they completely forget their original homeland, and remember not a trace of it. Those who were a little older remember some of it, and those who were much older remember most of it.

In the same way, the spirits in that world were in God's presence: *"Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yea."* Their food and sustenance was the Word of God, without letters and sounds. Some of the spirits were brought here in infancy. When they hear that Word, they do not remember their former situation and consider themselves strangers to that Word. This is that party who are veiled, who have sunk wholly into unbelief and error. Some of the spirits remember parts of that Word, and the desire and love for the other side appears within them. These are the believers. When a third group hear that Word, their ancient situation enters their vision: The veils are completely removed and they enter into union. These are the prophets and saints. (F 69–70/81)

Man is called a "rational animal." So man is two things: The food of his animality in this world is his sensual passions and desires. But that which is his quintessence—its food is knowledge, wisdom, and the vision of God. Man's animality is fleeing God, while his humanity is fleeing the world. *One of you is an unbeliever and one of you a believer* (LXIV 2): In your one existence two persons are warring.

To whom will fortune belong?
Whom will it make its friend? (F 56–57/68–69)

7. ANGEL VS. SATAN: INTELLECT VS. EGO

The strife between the intellect and sensuality has already been referred to in the context of the opposition between the intellect and the ego, for Rūmī sees sensuality as one of the ego's dominating characteristics. Moreover, he frequently compares the ego to various animals—in particular the ass, dog, pig, and cow—because of its essentially "beastly" nature and the fact that its horizon does not extend beyond its own mean passions and bodily needs. In the first passage below, he uses the terms "ego" and "sensuality" interchangeably.

> Now this "fire" is the fire of sensuality, within which lies the root of sin and error.
> External fire may be quenched with some water; the fire of sensuality pulls to hell.
> What is the remedy for sensuality's fire? The light of religion: It will extinguish the fire of the unbelievers.
> What kills this fire? The light of God: Make Abraham's light your master,
> So that your woodlike body may be delivered from the fire of your Nimrod-like ego.[26] (M I 3697–701)
> The sensuality of the throat has no savor, the sensuality of sex drags you back—they are shared with the dog and the pig, they make you equal to asses and cows. (D 26031)
> Tell the dog of the ego, "Take the whole world!" When has the ocean's shore ever been polluted by a dog? (D 10627)
> The dog of the ego has bared its teeth and nipped the spirit's foot. (D 29579)
> Since your ego predominates, you are an animal. Your properties are determined by that which predominates, oh self-worshiper! (M IV 2003)
> Close the ass's eye and open intellect's eye! For the ego is like an ass, and avarice is its bridle. (D 32521)
> People are devils and sensuality is a chain: It drags them toward shops and fields. (M IV 1116)

God created the angels from pure intellect and the beasts from pure sensuality, and He placed both intellect and sensuality within man. So man's intellect is essentially angelic, while his ego is essentially bestial. In Rūmī's vocabulary, "bestial" is equivalent to "satanic" and "demonic." Iblis and the other devils find access to man through his ego, which is one in substance with themselves.

The angels and the Intellect are of one nature, but for the sake of God's wisdom they assumed two forms:

The angel acquired wings and feathers like a bird, while the intellect put aside wings and acquired splendor.

Hence each of them aids the other, each beauteous one supports its fellow.

Both angel and Intellect are finders of God; both aided Adam and prostrated themselves to him.

The ego and Satan were also one from the beginning and were enemies and enviers of Adam.

He who saw Adam as a body fled, but he who saw him as a faithful light bowed.

Hence those two were clear seers, but the eyes of these two saw nothing but water and clay. (M III 3193–98)

The ego and Satan were one body, but they have shown themselves in two forms. (M III 4053)

Your ego is a demon, and envy is a part of its description: Imagine then how ugly and disgusting is the whole!

You are now feeding milk to this ugly snake. Beware! It will become a dragon, for it is a man-eater by nature. (D 4855–56)

Choose angelic character traits and rule over the demon! Slaughter your cow and set your foot upon the spheres! (D 24430)

Kill your vile ego, for it is your own devil. Then houris will appear within your breast.

Once you have killed your vile ego, then for certain you can place your foot upon the roof of the seventh heaven! (D 21323–24)

Just as the ego is identified with Iblis, so also it is identified with his realm, hell. Likewise the ego's ugly attributes derive from hell's qualities. The fire of hell is fed by unbelief and everything the intellect rejects: form and skin. For the angel and intellect see meaning, not form. They were not deceived by Adam's water and clay.

If you want to know the form of the ego, oh youth, read about hell and its seven gates! (M I 779)

This ego is hell, and hell is a dragon not diminished by oceans of water.

It drinks down the seven seas, yet the heat of that manburner does not become less. . . .

It makes a morsel out of a world and gulps it down. Its belly keeps shouting, *Is there any more?* (L 30) . . .

This ego of ours is a part of hell, and all parts possess the nature of their wholes. (M I 1375–76, 80, 82)

Every instant your ego emits a hundred sparks: "Look at me, I am one of the inhabitants of the Fire.

I am a part of the Fire, I will go to my whole. I am not light, I will not go to God's Presence." (M III 2464–65)

Hell is a dragon with seven heads; your greed is the bait, and hell is the snare. (M VI 4657)

The root of malice is hell, and your malice is a part of that whole, the enemy of your religion. (M II 274)

The mercy pertaining to faith was cut off from him: He became wrapped in satanic malice,

A factory of anger and maliciousness—know that malice is the root of error and unbelief! (M IV 111–112)

From man's soul envies are born. Be an angel! Entrust the realm to Adam!

The ego will swallow down the seeds of those sensual designs, and once you have planted them, they will surely grow. (D 11048–49)

The man doomed to hell, whose friend is skin, was given skin by God: *As often as their skins are wholly burned, We shall give them in exchange other skins* (IV 56).

Your meaning and your kernel rule over the Fire, but husks are the Fire's fuel.

A wooden pot full of water—the Fire's power only reaches the container.

Man's meaning is the master of the Fire. How can hell destroy its own master?

So increase not your body, increase your intellect! . . .

Pride is the result of skin. Hence its friends are position and property.

What is pride? Heedlessness of the marrow: Frozen, it is like the ice's heedlessness of the sun. . . .

Pride always seeks position and property, just as the bath-furnace derives perfection from its fuel, dried dung.

For these two nurses increase skin. They stuff it with fat and flesh and pride and arrogance.

Not having lifted their eyes to the kernel of the kernel, they imagine the skin to be the kernel.

The leader in this way was Iblis, for he fell prey to the snare of position. (M V 1933–37, 40–41, 47–50)

In several verses quoted above, the opposition between the ego and the intellect is equated to that between fire and light. This opposition again has a basis in prophetic tradition: "When the believer places his foot upon the bridge over hell, the Fire says, 'Pass over, oh believer, for your light has extinguished my fire.'"

> Muhammad said of hell that it will supplicate the believer in dread:
>
> "Oh king! Pass me by quickly. Hurry! For your light has taken away the heat of my fire."
>
> So the believer's light destroys the Fire—only an opposite can take away an opposite.
>
> Fire will be the opposite of light on the Day of Justice, for the former was derived from Severity and the latter from Bounty.
>
> If you want to repel the evil of fire, turn the water of Mercy upon the fire's heart.
>
> The fountain of that water of Mercy is the believer—the water of life is the pure spirit of the virtuous man.
>
> That is why your ego flees from him, since you are of fire, and he is the water of the stream. (M II 1248–54)

With the preceding passage we are brought back to the archetypes of much of the opposition within the world, the two divine Attributes of Gentleness and Severity, Mercy and Wrath. The whole drama of the opposition between angels and devils, intellect and ego, saints and unbelievers, paradise and hell, light and fire, derives from the Attributes. All these opposite pairs are necessary for the subsistence of the world and the manifestation of the Hidden Treasure. All perform a single task.

> If there were no pharoanic ambition and rank, from whence would hell find nurture?
>
> Fatten him, then kill him, oh Butcher! For the dogs of hell need food.
>
> If there were no adversaries and enemies in the world, men's anger would die.
>
> Hell is that anger, and it needs an adversary to live—otherwise Mercy would kill it.
>
> Then Gentleness would remain without Severity and evil. How would that display the King's Perfection? (M IV 1075–79)

The harmonious interplay between Gentleness and Severity manifests itself not only in the structure of the universe, but also in the manner man experiences his own existence, on whatever level. The whole of Rūmī's spiritual psychology is explained in terminology based upon the relationship between these two divine Attributes as they manifest themselves in different forms. Table III lists some of these terms; many subsequent chapters will be concerned with elucidating the interrelationships summarized here. Nevertheless, it must be kept in mind that these correspondences are fluid and changing, not hard and fast. Ultimately, "God's Mercy is prior to His Wrath," which means that all manifestations of Wrath and Severity are colored and determined by Mercy. Even hell is a Mercy, as we shall see shortly. Moreover, there can be no absolute good and evil in this world. Absolute values can only be attached to the Absolute. There can only be absolute Severity and Gentleness in God Himself, not in the world. If the prophets and saints are manifestations of Gentleness and Mercy from one point of view, they are manifestations of Severity and Wrath from another.

> God's Mercy dominates His Vengeance: Hence every prophet has conquered his opposite,
> For he is the result of Mercy, while his opposite, that ugly faced one, is a result of His Severity. (M V 515–516)
>
> Every existent that has lifted up its head from nonexistence is poison for one person and sugar for another. (M V 4236)
>
> Each and every part of the world is a snare for the fool and a means of deliverance for the wise.
> For one person it is candy, for another poison; for one it is Gentleness, for another Severity. (M VI 4287–88)

8. THE RETURN TO GOD

Man's return to God can be viewed from two points of view. From the first, man returns to his Creator because he has come from his Creator. His return is part of the divine wisdom and plan for creation, an aspect of the manifestation of the Hidden Treasure. This might be called "God's view of things." For in His eternal Knowledge, all is laid out and foreordained. From the second point of view, man is faced with the divine command to strive on the way of religion. The prophets and saints are there to guide him, and the existence of his own power of choice proves to him that his return to God is in his own hands. I shall summarize the first perspective in the remaining

Table III
Forms That Manifest Gentleness and Severity

Gentleness	*Severity*
angels	devils
intellect	ego
paradise	hell
light	fire
Adam	Iblis
saints	unbelievers
religion	unbelief
union	separation
expansion	contraction
hope	fear
laughter	tears
joy	heartache
sweetness	bitterness, sourness
sugar	vinegar
spring	autumn
summer	winter
day	night
rose	thorn
faithfulness	cruelty
pure wine	dregs
intoxication	sobriety, thought
intoxication	winesickness

sections of the present chapter, and deal with various dimensions of the second, that is, the "practice" of religion, in Part II.

The outward eye is not able to discern the real situation of the present world. Since it sees the form and not the meaning, or the picture and not the Painter, it cannot distinguish between the manifestations of the Attribute of Severity and those of Gentleness. It may experience what it takes to be a caress of Mercy, only to find out later that it had suffered a slap of Wrath. The only escape from this world of deception is the guidance of the prophets and saints (see below, II, B), those who have attained to the vision of the Heart and the eye that sees meaning; ultimately, their guidance alone can allow us to actualize that vision within ourselves. In short, until we have access to the meanings beyond the forms, we cannot perform a single

action with absolutely certain knowledge as to what sort of fruit that action will yield.

The mixture of opposites which makes up the world and gives rise to our confusing situation will not last indefinitely. For every individual, death marks the turning point, and resurrection the final removal of the veil covering the real nature of things. If we do not achieve the station of "seeing things as they are" in this world, we will certainly achieve it in the next. However, that may well be too late for us to reap any benefit from it.

One of the names of the Resurrection is the "Day of Justice," for on that day all men receive their just due. From one point of view what this means is that the *meanings* of people are bared, and their forms no longer play any role. The true nature of people dominates, so that everyone, including themselves, will behold it. Each person becomes a clear and distinct locus of manifestation for the Attributes of God, but the Attributes of Mercy and Gentleness produce a far different locus from those of Wrath and Severity. "On that day God will pay them in full their just due, and they shall know that God is the manifest Truth: corrupt women for corrupt men, and corrupt men for corrupt women; good women for good men, and good men for good women" (Koran XXIV 25–26).

> What is justice? To put something in the right place. What is injustice? To put something in the wrong place. (M VI 2596)
>
> It is the Day of Justice, and justice is to give what is due: The shoe belongs to the foot, the hat to the head. (M VI 1887)
>
> Although the Sea of Generosity throws up its waves in every direction, because of Justice the *corrupt women* belong to the *corrupt men*. (D 5132)
>
> Although flakes of bran have become hidden in the flour like thieves, the magistrate of His Justice pulls them out from every corner with a sieve. (D 19474)

9. CONGENEITY

"God's Justice puts everything in its proper place," i.e., the place it occupies with Him for all eternity. When a thing "returns to God" after playing its role in this world, it rejoins the Source from which it derived. Its role had been to manifest its own true nature by displaying clearly its archetype or meaning, that is, the peculiar combination of Attributes which go to make it up. Having played its part, it returns to those very Attributes from which it had come. So when Justice puts all things in their proper places, this means that it unites

them with their very selves. Rūmī characterizes the motivating force in this process by the simple principle, "Like attracts like." Each kind (*jins*) seeks to return to its own kind because of the fundamental "congeneity" (*jinsiyyat*) between the two.

Though each thing in this world of opposites flees from its own opposite, for a time it is held in place for God's purpose: to make the Hidden Treasure manifest. When the opposites have performed their function in the present world, they separate and move on to the next world, where like attracts like.

> Look at the trays in the druggist's shop: He has placed each kind next to its own kind.
> Since each kind is mixed with its own kind, a certain beauty is produced by their congeneity.
> If someone should mix the sugar with the aloeswood, the druggist will separate them from each other, piece by piece.
> The trays were broken and the spirits spilled: Good and evil were mixed together.
> God sent the prophets with their scriptures to replace the grains upon the tray. (M II 280–284)
> There are seventy-two diseases within the body, all caused by the pulling of the four elements—but without strings.
> Disease comes in order to tear the body apart, so that the elements may release each other.
> The elements are four birds with their feet tied together; death, illness, and disease untie the feet.
> Once the feet are untied, no doubt each bird-element will fly away.
> The pulling of these roots and branches places pain in our bodies at each instant,
> So that these compositions may dissolve and the bird of each part may fly to its origin.
> But God's Wisdom prevents this haste: He keeps them together until death's appointed time. (M III 4426–32)
> Without doubt congeneity derives from meaning, not from water and clay.
> Beware! Do not become a form-worshiper! Seek not the secret of congeneity in form.
> Form is like an inanimate object, a stone; inanimate things know nothing of congeneity.
> Consider the spirit an ant and the body a grain of wheat: Each instant the ant drags the grain back and forth.

It well knows that those borrowed grains will be transformed and become the same kind as itself.

One ant has found a barley-corn in the road, and another seizes a grain of wheat and runs.

Barley does not charge toward wheat, but ant comes toward ant, yes indeed.

The fact that the wheat goes toward the barley is secondary: Look at the ant, returning to its own kind.

Do not ask, "Why has the wheat gone to the barley?" Fix your eye on the antagonist, not on his hostage.

A black ant on a black felt cloth is hidden but the grain is before you on the way.

The intellect tells the eye, "Look well! How can a grain move without a carrier?" . . .

Discern the difference between ugly and beautiful with the intellect, not with the eye which speaks about "black" and "white". . . .

The bird's bane is the eye that sees its desire; the bird's deliverance is the intellect that sees the snare.

But there are other snares not perceived by the intellect. Hence Revelation, which sees the Unseen, sped to this side.

One kind may be discerned from another through the intellect: It is not proper to hurry to the forms. (M VI 2952–62, 67, 69–71)

What is congeneity? A sort of insight through which people find their way to each other.

God conceals that insight within someone; if He also places it within you, you are of his kind.

What is it that drags the body from one side to another? Insight. How should the aware attract the unaware? . . .

When God places within you the attributes of Gabriel, you seek a way to the sky, like a bird. . . .

When He places within you the attributes of asininity, you will fly to the feed trough, even if you have a hundred wings. (M VI 2992–94, 97, 99)

Oh brother! You are your thought: The rest of you is bones and fibers.

If you think of roses, you are a rosegarden; but if you think of thorns, you are fuel for the furnace. (M II 277–278)

Every bird flies to its own kind, following its spirit that runs on ahead.

Since the unbelievers are of the same kind as hell, they are happy in the hellish prison of this world.

Since the prophets are of the same kind as Paradise, they have gone to the paradise of the spirit and the heart. (M I 639–641)

What is it that attracts empty people? Empty lies. What pleases the inane? Inanity.

Each kind attracts its own kind—no cow ever went before a fierce lion. (M II 2055–56)

Their origin was from fire; in the end they returned to their origin.

That group was born from fire: Parts travel to their wholes. . . .

The mother seeks her child, principles seek out their derivatives. . . .

Without doubt every kind takes pleasure in its own kind. The part takes pleasure in its whole—look! (M I 874–875, 78, 89)

The movement of every mote is toward its root: Whatever a person's inclination, he becomes it. (D 10616)

Seek that insight which derives from the Eternal Light, for this fiery insight of yours moves forward like sparks.

Each kind goes toward its own kind—this is sufficient trial. The king goes to the king, the ass to the ass.

They take a fresh shoot to the garden; when a shoot is dry like firewood, they chop it up with an axe. (D 9313–15)

Since the prophets were the same in kind as the spirit and the angels, they attracted angels down from heaven. . . .

Then those human spirits that are the same kind as the prophets are pulled toward them steadily, like shadows,

For their intellects are dominant: Without doubt, the intellect's nature is the same in kind as the angel's.

But in God's enemy, the ego's self-will predominates. The ego is the same kind as the *lowest of the low* (XCV 5) and goes to it. (M IV 2697, 702–704)

With the tongue of meaning the rose says to the dung beetle, "Oh you with stinking armpits,

If you are fleeing from the rosebed, for sure you have an aversion to the rosegarden's perfection.

My jealousy is a nightstick beating you on the head: 'Begone from here, oh worthless one!'

If you should mix with me, oh contemptible bug, some people may think you were extracted from my mine.

The field is a fitting place for nightingales: For dung beetles, the latrine is a better home.

Since God kept me free from filth, how is it proper that He should give me filthy companions?

I had a vein of their nature within me once, but He cut it out—how shall an evil vein reach me now?"

One mark of Adam from eternity was that the angels bowed down to him because of his station.

Another mark was that Iblis did not bow down but said, "I am the king and the leader."

If Iblis had also prostrated himself, that would not have been Adam, but someone else.

At once the angel's prostration is his measure and the Enemy's denial his proof.

Witness to him were both the acknowledgment of the angels and the unbelief of that foul dog. (M II 2112–23)

Hell flees from the believer in the same way that the believer flees with all his soul from hell.

For his light is different in kind from fire: The seeker of light in truth is fire's opposite.

The Prophet said that when the believer in his supplications asks God for protection from hell,

Hell also earnestly begs protection from him: "Oh God, keep me far from so-and-so!"

The attractor is congeneity. So behold: Are you the same kind as unbelief or religion? (M IV 2712–16)

Every kind bursts its chain to go to its own kind. Whose kind am I, caught here in the snare? (D 15409)

God's Justice has given everyone a mate from his own kind: the elephant an elephant, the gnat a gnat. . . .

Gabriel and the angels perceive their Kaaba as the Lote Tree of the Far Boundary; the belly-slave's kiblah is a set table.

The gnostic's kiblah is the light of union, the philosopher's intellect turns toward fantasy. . . .

The kiblah of the men of meaning is patience and deliberation, that of form-worshipers inscriptions on a stone.

The kiblah of those who dwell in the inward is the Bountiful Lord, that of those who worship the outward a woman's face. . . .

Since you are pleased and happy with your own disposition, why do you flee from what suits it? (M VI 1894, 96–97, 1899–1900, 1905)

10. THE TOUCHSTONES

The prophets and saints call people to God and paradise, while Iblis and his followers call them to hell. So these two groups perform opposite functions in the world. But all opposites are correlative terms and ultimately manifest a single reality. Hence, from another point of view, the prophets and Iblis are performing a single task: making the Hidden Treasure manifest by inciting people to display their inward natures. Those who follow the prophets and saints show that within them the Attribute of Gentleness predominates, while those who follow Satan reveal that they are primarily manifestations of the Attribute of Severity. But in both cases the goal and end result is the same: the manifestation of God's nonmanifest Attributes.

The conflict between the prophets and the satans, or between religion and unbelief, takes place within the world, the theatre for the manifestation of the Hidden Treasure. Hence Rūmī often refers to the world, to the prophets and saints, and to Iblis and his followers as three "touchstones." Everyone's metal is tested against the three. Those who are pure gold rejoin the light from which they derived. And those who are base metal go into the fire.

Since the goal of existence is making manifest, the creatures must be tested by counsel and leading astray.
The devil persistently leads astray, and the saint persistently guides. (M IV 3588–89)

Everyone knows God's Gentleness and everyone knows God's Severity. Everyone flees from His Severity and holds fast to His Gentleness. But God has hidden severities within Gentleness and gentlenesses within Severity. This is God's trickery, concealment, and deception, in order that the people of discernment—those who see with the light of God—may be separated from those who see only the present and outward situation, *That He might try you, which of you is fairest in works* (LXVII 2). (M V between 419 and 420)

God has sent these promises and threats through Revelation because of the good and evil He has mixed together.

Since truth and falsehood have been mixed, since currency and counterfeit have been dumped together in one trunk,

An outstanding touchstone is needed, one which has been tested against the transcendent realities,

So that it may discern the forgeries and issue commands about the remedies to be taken. (M II 2965–68)

Before this we were a single community; no one knew whether we were good or bad.

Both counterfeit and genuine were circulating in the world, since all was night, and we were night-travelers.

Then the sun of the prophets rose. It said, "Oh adulterated ones, go! Oh pure ones, come!"

An eye is needed to distinguish colors, an eye is needed to tell rubies from stones.

The eye discerns jewels from rubbish: So bits of rubbish scratch the eye.

These base counterfeits hate the day, but the mine's gold nuggets are in love with it.

For day is the mirror in which they become known; through it gold coin is honored.

God called the Resurrection "day" because day shows forth the beauty of red and yellow.

Hence the reality of day is the inmost consciousness of the saints: Beside their noon, day is but a shadow. (M II 285–293)

When you consider carefully, you see that all are doing God's service: the impious and the pious, the rebellious and the obedient, the devil and the angel. For example, a king desires to test and make trial of his servants with various means, so that the constant may be discerned from the inconstant, the loyal from the disloyal, and the faithful from the unfaithful. There is need for a tempter and provoker so that the servants' constancy may be established. If there were none, how could it be established? So that tempter and provoker does the king's service, since the king desired him to act in such a way. He sent a wind so that the constant could be discerned from the inconstant, the gnats from the trees and gardens. (F 46/58)

Iblis said, "Solve this mystery! I am the touchstone of the false coin and the true.

God made me the test of lion and cur. He made me the test of genuine and counterfeit.

When did I ever blacken the counterfeit coin's face? I am the assayer. I only declare its worth.

For the good I act as a guide, but I rip off dried branches.

Why do I put down this fodder? So that the animal's congeneity may become apparent.

If a wolf and a gazelle should give birth to a young one and there is doubt as to its kind,

Place herbs and bones before it and see to which side it runs.

If it comes to the bones, it is a dog; and if it wants the herbs, for certain it has the veins of a gazelle.

Severity and Gentleness were married and a world of good and evil was born from the two.

Display the herbs and the bones! Display the food of the spirit and the food of the ego!

If he seeks the food of the ego, he is defective, but if he seeks the food of the spirit, he is a chief.

If he serves the body, he is an ass, but if he enters the ocean of the spirit, he will find a pearl.

Although these two—good and evil—are different, both perform a single task.

The prophets display good works, the enemies display sensual desires.

How can I make good into bad? I am not God. I invite them, I am not their Creator.

I do not make the beautiful ugly: I am not the Lord. I am a mirror for ugliness and beauty." (M II 2672–87)

11. DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Death and resurrection give man full consciousness and awareness of the nature of his own spirit. Through death man awakens from the sleep of heedlessness, while at the Resurrection the final separation of opposites takes place.

Everyone's death, oh youth, is the same color as himself: for God's enemy an enemy, for His friend, a friend.

A mirror before a Turcoman shows a shining face; a mirror before a black man shows blackness.

If you fear and flee from death, you fear yourself, oh friend. Take heed!

It is your own ugly face, not the face of death. Your spirit is like a tree, and death its leaves.

Whether good or bad, it has grown from you. Every hidden thought, pleasant or unpleasant, derives from your own self. (M III 3439–43)

Know that every suffering is a piece of death. Drive death's part from yourself, if you can!

Since you cannot escape death's part, know that its whole will pour down upon your head.

If death's part becomes sweet to you, know that God will make the whole sweet.

Pains are the prophets of death. Do not turn away from the prophets, oh worthless man!

Whoever lives sweetly will die in bitterness, whoever worships the body will not win the spirit. (M I 2298–302)

The killing and death that befall the bodily frame are like breaking pomegranates and apples.

The sweet ones go into the pomegranate stew, but the desiccated ones yield only an empty sound.

Indeed, those that have meaning become manifest, but the desiccated ones are disgraced.

Go, strive after meaning, oh form-worshiper! For meaning is the wing upon form's body. (M I 707–710)

That commander of mankind, the Prophet, has spoken the truth: "No one who has passed beyond this world

Feels pain or regret or loss because of death, but he has a hundred regrets for what he let slip by":

"Why did I not make death my kiblah, death which is the treasury of every good fortune and provision?

Why out of blindness did I make the kiblah of my whole life those fantasies that disappeared at the appointed hour?"

The regret of the dead does not stem from death, it arises because they stopped at the pictures:

"We did not see that all this was paintings and foam: Foam takes its provision and fodder from the Sea." (M VI 1450–55)

At the Resurrection, the meanings of all forms are bared. All acts, character traits, and thoughts which belonged to man in the world appear in their true guise. All of the meanings that had been concealed and hidden take upon forms consistent with their true nature. "You were heedless of this; therefore We have removed your covering, so today your sight is piercing" (Koran L 22).

The Prophet said that on the Day of Resurrection, every single body will hear the command, "Rise up!"

The "sound of the trumpet" is Holy God's command: "Oh motes, lift up your heads from the dust!"

Each person's spirit will return to his body, in the same way that awareness returns to the body in the morning. . . .

The foot knows its own shoe in the dark: How should the spirit not know its own body? (M V 1772–74, 79)

It is said that in the other world, scrolls will fly, some into the right hands of the dead, some into their left hands. There will be angels, the Throne, heaven and hell, the Scales, the Reckoning, and the Book. None of this is clear until an analogy is given. Although these things have no equivalence in this world, they can be determined by analogy.

The analogy of that world in this is as follows: At night everyone goes to sleep—shoemaker, king, judge, tailor, and all the rest. Their thoughts fly away from them, and no thoughts remain for anyone. But then the morning breaks, like Israfil's blast on the trumpet, and it gives life to the motes of their bodies. The thought of each one is like a scroll; flying and running it comes back to each. There are never any mistakes. The tailor's thought returns to the tailor, the lawyer's thought to the lawyer, the ironmonger's thought to the ironmonger, the tyrant's thought to the tyrant, and the just man's thought to the just man. Does anyone go to bed a tailor and wake up a shoemaker? No, for that activity and occupation belong to him, and once again he occupies himself with it. So you should know that in the next world it is the same way. This is not impossible, for it happens in this world.

If a person clings to this analogy and follows it to the end, he will witness all the states of that world in this world. He will catch the scent of them, and they will be revealed to him. He will come to know that everything is contained in God's Power. You see many bones desiccated in the grave, but they are in comfort. Their owner sleeps happily and drunken, and is fully aware of that joy and intoxication. . . . The analogy of this is to be found in this world of sensory objects: Two people are sleeping in a single bed. One sees himself in the midst of banquets, rosegardens, and paradise, while the other sees himself in the midst of serpents, the guardians of hell, and scorpions. If you investigate their situation, you will see neither the one nor the other. So why should it be strange that in the grave the parts of some people are in joy, happiness, and intoxication, while others are in pain, torment, and suffering, although you see neither the one nor the other? (F 166–167/175–176)

Man's existence is a jungle: Beware of his existence if you breathe the breath of the spirit!

There are thousands of wolves and pigs in our existence: good and evil, fair and foul.

Man's properties are determined by the trait that predominates: If gold is more than copper, then he is gold.

Of necessity you will be given form at the Resurrection in accordance with the character that predominates in your existence. (M II 1416–19)

Your resurrection will tell you the secret of death: The fruits will tell you the secret of the leaves. (M II 1825)

Morning is the small Resurrection, oh seeker of merit! Take it as an analogy of the great Resurrection. . . .

The smaller Resurrection displays the greater Resurrection; the smaller death illuminates the greater death.

But here your scroll is imagination, so it is concealed; at the greater Resurrection it will be clearly seen.

Here imagination is hidden, while its effects are apparent; there forms will grow from imagination.[27]

Look at the architect's image of a house in his heart, like a seed in the ground.

That imagination comes out from within, just as the ground gives birth because of the seed within it.

Every image that makes its abode in the heart will become a form on the Day of Resurrection,

Like the image within the architect's mind, like the plant growing in the seedbed of the earth. (M V 1780, 88–95)

Many wonders exist in the Unseen. The nights are pregnant, bringing the results and effects of the Unseen into outward manifestation. Hearts are full of desires and heads full of cravings that attract those results and draw them down into this world. People lament in order to bring those things concealed in the Unseen and hidden in the pregnant night into existence, outwardness, and formal manifestation. For in this world and the next, God will create from every invisible thought a visible form worthy of that thought, and He will link that form to the thinker. "If the thought is noble, it will ennoble you; but if it is base, it will act toward you with baseness." Oh king of princes—may God prolong your elevation—you know and believe in this doctrine, thanks be to God! That is why all your thoughts glorify His command and commiserate with His creatures. Your ears are turned entirely toward the cries of the distressed, and your eyes totally toward the weeping of those who have suffered injustice—thus you apply salve to their wounds and extend a helping hand. Each

day may God give you success after success and confirmation after confirmation! (MK 98: 102–103/195)

The unicolority of the Resurrection will be unveiled and made manifest for both the good and the bad.

For in that world, meanings become form; our shapes become suited to our character.

Then thought will become the inscription on the scrolls; this inward lining will become the outward surface of garments.

These days men's inward consciousnesses are like piebald cows: The spindle of rationality spins threads of a hundred different colors in the religious sects.

It is the turn of one-hundred-coloredness and one-hundred-heartedness: How should the World of Unicolority display itself? . . .

It is the turn of the wolf, and Joseph is at the bottom of the well; it is the turn of the Egyptians, and Pharoah is king. . . .

But within the thickets the lions are waiting. Soon God's command, "Come forward!", will be spread abroad.

Then the lions will come forth from the prairie. Without veils God will display income and expenditure.

Man's substance will encompass the land and the sea. The piebald cows will be sacrificed on the Day of Slaughter:

The dreadful Day of Slaughter at the Resurrection is a festival for the believers and destruction for the cows. . . .

"This world is the house of God's Severity. Behold Severity, since you have chosen Severity!"

Behold the bones and hair of those who were the objects of Severity: Severity's sword has scattered them over the sea and the land. (M VI 1865–69, 71, 73–76, 90–91)

How many children of your thoughts will you see in the grave after death, all surrounding your soul crying, "Papa"?

Your good thoughts give birth to youths and houris; your ugly thoughts produce great demons.

Look at the secret of the architect's thought, become palaces and mansions! Look at the eternal predestination, become so many worlds! (D 20435–37)

After your death, your good traits will run on ahead of you; like moon-faced ladies, those attributes will stroll gracefully.

One will take your hand, another will ask after you, and still another will bring you offerings of ruby lips and sugar kisses.

Once you have divorced the body, you will see houris lined up, *submissive, obedient, penitent, devout* (LXVI 5).

Uncountable, your traits run before your casket—your patience has become *those that pluck out*, your gratitude *those that draw out* (LXXIX, 1–2).

In the grave those pure attributes become your intimate friends, clinging to you like sons and daughters.

The warp and weft of your obedience will weave you many robes; the expanse of your spirit will be displayed outside the six directions.

Take heed! Be quiet, so that you may plant the seeds of good works—for the Garden of Eden will grow up from the acts of faithful servants. (D *385*)

Your acts, born from your spirit and body, will cling to your skirt like your child. (M VI 419)

Know that acts are not the same color as their retribution: No service is colored like the payment.

The laborer's wage does not resemble his work, since the latter is an accident, the former the substance and permanent. (M III 3445–46)

Branch and blossom do not resemble the seed. How should man's body resemble semen? . . .

Semen derives from bread, but how should the two be alike? People come from semen, but how could they resemble it? . . .

Jesus appeared from Gabriel's breath, but how could he be similar or comparable to him in form?

Man is from clay, but does he resemble clay? No grape looks like the vine.

Does theft have the same shape as the gallows? Should piety resemble everlasting life?

No origin resembles its effect, so you do not know the root of pain and torment.

But this retribution is not without an origin. How should God inflict pain on an innocent person?

Though a thing's origin and producer do not resemble it, they still give rise to it.

So know that your suffering is the result of some lapse; the blow was inflicted because of your sensuality. (M V 3978, 80, 82–88)

In short, the world is like a mountain. Whatever you say, good or evil, will come back to you. If you imagine that you spoke beautifully, but the mountain returned an ugly echo, that is absurd. If a nightingale should sing to the mountain, does it give back the sound of a crow, a man, or an ass? So know for certain that you yourself made the sound of an ass.

> When you come to the mountain, speak sweetly. Why do you bray like an ass? (F 152/160)

The inhabitants of hell are happier in hell than they were in this world, since in hell they are aware of God, but in the world they were not. And nothing is sweeter than the awareness of God. So the reason they wish to return to the world is to perform works in order to become aware of the locus of manifestation for God's Gentleness. It is not that the world is a happier place than hell. (F 229/236)

Part II

PRACTICE

A.

Doubters and Deniers

When faced with the claims and demands of a religion, people may react in a number of ways. Some may believe in the religion's truth and as a result begin to practice its teachings. Rūmī addresses much of what he has to say to this group. Others may completely reject religion's claims. Rūmī has little to say to this group and limits himself to pointing out their blindness and the fact that all their acts and words illustrate the principle of "congeneity."

Still another group of people may react in a third way to religion's call: They will be faced with doubts, uncertainties, and misunderstandings. They may be attracted to the religion, but their uncertainty does not allow them to put its teachings into practice. Many of Rūmī's verses are addressed to this third group.

For example, a particular misunderstanding may arise from meditating upon God's Omniscience and Omnipotence. If in fact the creation is but the manifestation of the Hidden Treasure and all things return to their sources, then all is predestined and there is really no use in entering the Way. For if a person is going to be among the damned, there is nothing he can do to prevent it; and if he is going to be saved, whatever he does makes no difference. This sort of argument must have been at least as prevalent in Rūmī's day as it is in our own, for he takes considerable pains to illustrate its absurdity.

1. THE BLINDNESS OF THE DENIERS

The astronomer says, "You claim there is
something other than these spheres and the terrestrial globe

that I see. As far as I am concerned, only these things exist. If there is something else, show me where it is!" His demand is invalid from the outset. He says, "Show me where it is," but that thing has no place. So come, show me where and from whence is your objection. It is not upon the tongue, in the mouth, or within the breast. Dissect all of these, piece by piece and atom by atom. You will find nothing of this objection and thought in these things. So we realize that your thought has no place. Since you do not know the place of your own thought, how should you know the place of the Creator of thought? (F 212/218–219)

The denier's oft repeated argument is this: "If there were something else, I would have seen it."

If a child does not see the states of the intellect, will a rational man abandon it?

And if a rational man should not see the states of love, love's auspicious moon will not decrease.

The eyes of Joseph's brothers did not see his beauty: How should it have disappeared from Jacob's heart?

Moses' eye looked at his staff of wood, but the eye of the Unseen saw a serpent and tumult. . . .

These words have no limit to their perfection, but in the eyes of every deprived soul they appear like fantasy.

Since for him "reality" is the genitalia and the gullet, speak less to him about the mysteries of the Friend!

In our eyes, the genitalia and the gullet are fantasy; hence at every instant the spirit shows its beauty. (M V 3930–34, 37–39)

He has put aside the world, full of the light of sun and moon, and stuck his head into a hole:

"If it is true, where is the light?" Remove your head from the hole and look, contemptible man! (M III 4796–97)

You say, "Show me the inhabitants of the Unseen!" What do veiled virgins want with beasts of burden? (D 20008)

The philosopher denies the existence of the devil: At that very instant the devil seizes him.

Have you not seen the devil? Then look at yourself! If your nature is not demonic, why is your face so dark?

If a man's heart harbors doubt and perplexity, in this world he is secretly a philosopher. (M I 3283–85)

The deniers have made a mockery of the examples and explanations of those who remember God.

If you want to mock, go ahead—how long will you live, oh carrion? How long? (M IV 1080–81)

If the soul of Thy denier becomes the enemy of my intoxicated spirit, in answer to him Thy Beauty is enough for me. . . .

He says, "He does not exist and I do not believe in Him." From that "not", oh brother, I am as I am. (D 17680, 82)

2. FATALISM AND FREE CHOICE

Moslems have often been called "fatalists," and without doubt there is a strong emphasis in Islam upon the absolute Power of God. Islam is founded upon the "profession of God's Unity" (*tawḥīd*). A strict application of this principle means that everything must ultimately be referred back to the One, whose Omniscience, moreover, demands that He have full knowledge of every last detail of creation. Numerous Koranic passages support this point of view, as do such well-known prophetic sayings as, "The Pen has dried concerning what shall be": The Pen, identified by the Prophet himself with the Intellect through which creation takes place, has already inscribed and recorded everything that will happen from the beginning of creation to its end.

But an unbiased look at many periods of Islamic history shows no signs whatsoever of a "fatalistic" streak in the Moslem peoples. And in fact, by sifting through the Koran and the prophetic sayings, one can find at least as many references to man's free will, power of choice, and responsibility as to his predestination. The Moslems were fully aware that to tell someone he is predestined in every sense, and then to ask him to practice religion, involves blatant absurdity. Man's true situation, especially from the point of view of his own existence and awareness, lies somewhere between the two extremes. He is predestined, but he chooses the path he is going to follow by his own free will. If he were not free God would be an unbelievable tyrant, rewarding and punishing people for acts for which they were not responsible. But God is Just, putting everything in its proper place.

Rūmī teaches that man is indeed free to make his own choice. From a certain point of view, free choice is the overriding consideration of man's existence. It is the "Trust" bestowed upon him by God. And the Covenant of Alast signifies that man accepted the obvious consequence of free will: responsibility for the rewards and punishments he will receive for his actions. The fact that man is continually being tested by the "Touchstones" only makes sense in the context of the freedom of his will. Moreover, the fact that man has been made in

God's image tells us that somehow he must share in God's Freedom. God "does what He will," and man partakes of this divine Attribute to some degree.

Ultimately, those who argue that "all is predestined" and that therefore there is no need to practice religion are blatant hypocrites. For they only employ such arguments when it suits them. If they are asked to do something they do not want to do, they say there is no use. But ask them to abandon work in other areas—such as in gratifying their sensuality—and they immediately refuse.

Free will is the salt of worship: After all, these heavenly spheres turn involuntarily—

Their revolution gains neither reward nor punishment, for it is free will that provides merit at the time of the Reckoning.

The whole world glorifies God, but that compulsory glorification has no reward.

"Put a sword in his hand and remove his incapacity, so that he may become a holy warrior or a highwayman."

For *We have honored* Adam through free will: He became half honey-bee, half snake.

The believers are a mine of honey, like bees, the unbelievers a mine of poison, like snakes. . . .

When profligates are put in prison, they all become devout and pious, calling upon God. . . .

The power to act is your profit-earning capital: Seize this power's opportunity and consider it well.

Man is mounted upon the steed of *We have honored*: The reins of free will are in the hands of his discernment. (M III 3287–92, 97, 299–300)

God's Free Will has given existence to our free will: His Free Will is like a rider hidden beneath the dust.

His Free Will creates our free will, His commands are founded upon a free will within us. (M V 3087–88).

The angel and the devil only display their wares to incite the veins of free will. . . .

So the devil and the spirit, who make this display, both help to perfect man's freedom.

We possess a free will hidden within us. When it sees two different objects of desire, it increases. (M V 2984, 3004–05)

When God assigns a particular lot to a person, this does not preclude his consent, desire, and free will.

God makes an unfortunate man suffer and he flees from Him in ingratitude,

But when He sends suffering to a fortunate man, he moves closer to Him.

In battle, the cowards fear for their lives and freely choose retreat.

The brave also fear for their lives, but they charge the ranks of the enemy.

Fear and heartache take the Rustams forward, but that coward dies within himself from his fear.

Tribulation and fear for one's life are touchstones—through them the brave are distinguished from the cowardly. (M IV 2914–20)

O heart, bring an analogy for the sake of discernment, so that you may know the difference between compulsion and free will:

One hand shakes with a tremor, but you yourself move another hand from its place.

Know that both movements are created by God, but the one cannot be equated with the other.

You are sorry for having moved your hand—why is it that the man with the tremor is not sorry? (M I 1496–99)

The prophets answered the deniers, "True, He has created certain attributes which cannot be changed,

But He has also created accidental attributes; thus a person you despise may become agreeable.

If you say to a stone, 'Become gold!' that is useless; but if you say that to copper, there is a way.

If you tell sand to become clay, it cannot; but if you tell earth to become clay, that can be done.

God has given sufferings which cannot be remedied, like lameness, a sunken nose, or blindness.

And He has given sufferings which have a remedy, like facial paralysis and headaches.

He has made medicines for establishing bodily harmony; these pains and medicines are not in vain.

On the contrary, most sufferings have a remedy. When you search earnestly, you will find it." (M III 2909–16)

Without doubt we possess a certain free will. You cannot deny the plain evidence of the senses.

No one ever says to a stone, "Come!" No one expects faithfulness from a clod of earth.

No one says to a man, "Hey you, fly!" Nor will he say, "Come, oh blind man, look at me!"

God said, *Nothing intolerable is laid upon the blind* (XXIV 61)—how could the Lord who gives relief impose the intolerable?

No one says to a stone, "You came late," or to a stick, "Why did you beat me?"

Does anyone make such inquiries from a person under compulsion? Does anyone beat a person who has an excuse?

Commands, prohibitions, wrath, bestowal of honor, and rebuke concern only those who possess free will, oh pure friend! (M V 2967–73)

You do not know to which of the two groups you belong, so strive to find out what you are.

When you place your goods upon a ship, you do so while trusting in God.

You do not know which of the two you will be: drowned on the voyage, or one of the saved.

You cannot say, "Until I know who I am, I will not hurry to the ship and the sea.

Am I saved in this way or drowned? Reveal to me to which group I belong!

I will not go on this journey in doubt and with empty hopes like the others."

If you say this, you will not accomplish any trading, since the mystery of these two possibilities lies hidden in the Unseen.

A fearful and weak-hearted merchant will gain neither profit nor loss.

Nay, he will suffer loss, since he is deprived and despicable: Only the fire-eater will find light.

Since all works are based upon "perhaps," the work of religion is to be preferred, for through it you can find deliverance. . . .

In morning when you go to your shop, you run in the hope and expectation of your daily bread.

If you have no hope for your daily bread, why do you go? You fear deprivation—why then are you strong?

Why has not the fear of a predestined deprivation of your daily bread made you weak in your striving?

You answer, "Although there is such a fear of deprivation, the fear will be greater if I am lazy."

Then why, oh evil-thinking man, does the fear of loss hold you back in the work of religion? (M III 3082–91, 94–99)

Whenever you are inclined toward a work, you see your own power clearly.

But whenever you are not inclined and have no desire, you become a fatalist, saying, "This is from God."

The prophets are fatalists in the work of this world, the unbelievers are fatalists in the work of the next world.

The prophets choose freely the work of the next world, the ignorant choose freely the work of this world. (M I 635–638)

Beware! Read the words of Iblis, *Oh Lord, because Thou hast led me astray. . . .* (XV 39), lest you become a fatalist and weave perversions.

Until when will you climb the tree of predestination, putting aside your free will,

Warring and arguing with God like Iblis and his progeny?

How can you claim "compulsion" when you enter into disobedience with such joy?

Does anyone under compulsion act with such abandon? Does anyone, having "lost his way," run dancing like you? . . .

Whatever your ego desires, you have free will in that, but whatever your intellect desires, you claim to be compelled. (M IV 1393–97, 1401)

The true interpretation of "The Pen has dried" is that you should perform the most important task.

The Pen has written, "In keeping with every work there is a consequence and a retribution."

If you walk crookedly, "The Pen has dried": you will receive crookedness. If you bring straightness, you will reap felicity.

If you work injustice, you will be wretched: "The Pen has dried." If you are just, you will eat the fruit: "The Pen has dried."

If someone steals, his hand will be lost: "The Pen has dried." If he drinks wine, he will become drunk: "The Pen has dried."

Do you allow—can it be allowable—that God, because of a prior decision, is dismissed from His office,

Saying, "The affair has gone out of My hands. Do not come before Me so often, do not entreat Me so much!"?

No! The meaning is, "The Pen has dried on the fact that in My eyes, justice and injustice are not the same.

I have distinguished between good and evil, and I have distinguished between the bad and the worse. . . ."

How could the meaning of "The Pen has dried" be that faithfulness and perfidy are one and the same? (M V 3131–39, 51)

In the manner of the hypocrites you present your excuse: "I am so busy with providing for my wife and children,

That I do not have time to scratch my head, much less to practice religion.

O noble man, remember me in your prayers, so that in the end, I may become one of the saints!"

He does not speak these words with passion and ardor—half-asleep, a man mumbled some nonsense and slept again.

"I cannot escape from the need to feed my family, I must seek lawful earnings with all my effort."

What do you mean by "lawful," oh you who have gone astray? I see nothing lawful but your blood.

You have an escape from God, but not from food. You have an escape from religion, but not from idols.

Oh you who cannot bear to be without this despicable world! How can you bear to be without Him who spread it as a carpet?

Oh you who cannot bear to be without luxuries and comforts! How can you bear to be without the Generous God?

Oh you who cannot bear to be without the pure and the impure! How can you bear to be without Him who created the two? . . .

His words, "Well, I am thinking about it"—that also is the ego's deception.

And his words, "He is the Forgiving, the Merciful"—that is naught but the vile ego's trick.

Oh you who have died in your anxiety over not finding bread! Why do you fear? Is He not the Forgiving and the Merciful? (M II 3067–76, 85–87)

B.

The Prophets and Saints

We have already seen that the prophets and saints are essentially "angelic" beings, since their intellects have vanquished their egos. We have also seen that they represent one of the most important Touchstones: If a person is able to recognize the prophets and saints for what they are and to follow their guidance, this shows that in him also the intellect dominates the ego. But of course he will not be able to attain to a spiritual station wherein his intellect has completely vanquished his ego without a long period of effort and striving on the spiritual path.

A good body of Rūmī's teachings concerns the nature of the prophets and more especially the saints and the necessity of following them. Numerous stories in the *Mathnawī* deal with this theme, and hundreds of ghazals in the *Dīwān* are written in praise of Shams-i Tabrīzī and other saints.

The prophets are those people who have received a message from God for a whole community. The saints are those who follow one of the prophets and attain to the state of human perfection to which the prophet calls mankind. To oversimplify the matter,[1] one could say that the prophets receive a revelation from God which embraces both form and meaning: The "form" is the Scripture, the teachings, and all the special practices the prophet institutes, while the "meaning" is the spiritual content of these outward forms. But the saint does not receive a new form. Instead he follows the prophet in formal matters, but he gains full consciousness of the inward meaning of the revelation. Outwardly he is dependent upon the prophet for various formal elements of the religion he practices, but inwardly he is in direct contact

with God. In this sense he has received his own "revelation." Of course many Sufis are careful to distinguish between the "revelation" (*waḥy*) received by the prophet and the "inspiration" (*ilhām*) or "unveiling" (*kashf*) received by the saint. But Rūmī often employs the term "revelation" in referring to the special knowledge of the saint.[2] He explains why he does this as follows:

> It is said that after Muḥammad and the prophets, revelation does not descend upon anyone else. Why not? In fact it does, but then it is not called "revelation." It is what the Prophet referred to when he said, "The believer sees with the Light of God." When the believer looks with God's Light, he sees all things: the first and the last, the present and the absent. For how can anything be hidden from God's Light? And if something is hidden, then that is not the Light of God. Therefore the meaning of revelation exists, even if it is not called revelation. (F 128/139)

Rūmī invariably refers to "prophets" in the plural and often tells stories about the Semitic prophets, such as Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, in order to draw conclusions relevant to the spiritual life. It is only natural, however, that for him the prophet *par excellence* is Muḥammad. Even so, Rūmī's verses are addressed at an audience for whom the basic truth and preeminence of Muḥammad's teachings are largely unquestioned. His real emphasis is upon the importance of the saint, for he holds that the prophets and saints are of one substance; almost anything said about the former applies also to the latter. His constant references to the necessity of following the prophets means also that man must follow the saints.

According to the Prophet, "The old man among his people is like the prophet in his community." The term "old man" (Arabic *shaykh*, Persian *pīr*) is of first importance in Rūmī's teachings. For there are many kinds and levels of saints, corresponding to the different kinds and levels of human perfection. But only the shaykh is the full successor of the prophet, for only he has the right and authority to guide disciples on the spiritual path.[3]

Although Rūmī constantly refers to the necessity of following a shaykh, he also adds a word of warning for the over-enthusiastic: There are many who claim to be shaykhs but who are not. To entrust one's spiritual development to such a person is pure stupidity and will result in the utmost harm. One need hardly add that if this was true in Rūmī's day, one of the golden ages not only of Sufism but also of other spiritual paths throughout the world, it is hardly less true today, when on overy side "great spiritual masters" hawk their wares.

1. THE NEED FOR A GUIDE

Although you are far, far from God, wag your tail: *Wherever you are, turn your faces* (II 144).

When an ass falls into the mire because of his fast pace, he moves constantly in his attempt to stand up.

He does not smooth out his place in order to stay: He knows this is no place to pass his life.

Your sense perception is less than that of an ass, for your heart has not jumped up out of this mud.

You interpret this mud as a "special dispensation," since you do not want to detach your heart from it.

You say, "This is permissible, since I am under compulsion. God in His generosity will not punish a helpless man." (M II 3354–59)

The house without a window is hell: The foundation of religion, oh servant of God, is to make windows! (M III 2404)

Zulaykhā shut the doors on every side, but Joseph was able to find an exit through effort. . . .[4]

Though you see no apertures before you in the world, rush about madly like Joseph,

So that the lock may be opened and the doorway appear, and you may find a place in Placelessness.

You have come into this world, oh you who are being tested, but you do not see the road by which you came.

You have come from a place and a domicile. Do you know how you came? No.

So do not say there is no way out—we can all depart by this wayless way. (M V 1105, 7–11)

Whoever flees from a master in this world flees from good fortune. Know this!

You have learned a trade to make a livelihood for your body. Now grasp the trade of religion!

You have become clothed and wealthy in the world. What will you do when you leave this place?

Learn a trade through which you can earn the income of forgiveness in the next world! (M II 2591–94)

Since Iblis became accustomed to being a leader, he looked upon Adam with the eye of denial:

"Can there be a leader better than myself, so that someone like me should prostrate himself to him?" . . .

Since leadership has become your bosom friend, whoever breaks you is your ancient enemy.

If someone speaks contrary to your disposition, many hatreds toward him arise within you:

"He is pulling me out of my own disposition; he wants to make me his pupil and follower!" . . .

Your bad disposition has become solidly rooted; the ant of sensuality has become a serpent because of habits.

Kill the serpent of sensuality at the beginning! Otherwise, your serpent will become a dragon.

But everyone sees his own serpent as an ant. Seek the explanation of this from the Possessor of the Heart!

Until copper becomes gold, it does not know it is copper. Until the heart becomes king, it does not know it is indigent.

Become the servant of the elixir, like copper! Suffer cruelty from the Keeper of the Heart, oh heart!

Who is the Heart-Keeper? The Possessor of the Heart. Know this well, for it is he who leaps out of the world, night and day!

Find not fault with the servant of God! Accuse not the king of theft! (M II 3462–63, 66–68, 71–77)

Seek the People of God! *Enter thou among My servants! Enter thou My Paradise*! (LXXXIX 29–30) God does not speak to everyone, just as the kings of this world do not speak to every weaver. They appoint ministers and representatives so that through them people may find the way to them. In the same way God has singled out certain servants, so that everyone who seeks Him may find Him within them. All the prophets have come for this reason. Only they are the Way. (F 229/237)

Since you are not a prophet, follow the Way! Then one day you may come out of this pit and reach a high station.

Since you are not a sultan, be a subject! Since you are not the captain, take not yourself the helm!

Since you are not perfect, take not a shop alone! Be pliant to the hand, so that you may become leavened dough.

Listen to the text, *Be silent*! (VII 204), and be silent! Since you have not become God's tongue, be an ear! (M II 3453–56)

The Prophet said, "In this way, you have no more faithful companion than your works.

If they are good, they will be your friends forever; but if they are bad, they will be the serpents in your grave."

How can these works and this earning in the way of righteousness be accomplished without a master, oh father?

Can you practice the meanest profession in the world without a master's guidance?

First there is theory, then practice; then these two give fruit after a time or after death. . . .

Theory is learned through words, a profession through acts. (M V 1051–55, 62)

Whoever enters the Way without a guide will take a hundred years to travel a two-day journey. . . .

Whoever undertakes a profession without a master becomes the laughingstock of city and town. (M III 588, 90)

In the Sea of the Spirit, swimming is of no avail: Noah's ark is the only escape.

Muḥammad, that king of the prophets, said, "I am the ship in this Universal Ocean,

I, or that person who has become my true vicegerent in inward vision." (M IV 3357–59)

Oh tailor, ironworking is not your job! You do not know fire's activity: do not do this!

First learn from the ironworkers. Otherwise, do not try it without instruction.

Since you are not a sailor, do not enter the Sea. Do not set out for the waves and the Sea's roaring.

And if you do, sit in the corner of a ship and do not let go of it.

If you fall, fall into the ship! Do not support yourself with your own hands and feet!

If you want heaven, become Jesus' companion! Otherwise, do not aim for the azure spheres! (D 21291–96)

A wedding was being celebrated on top of the heavens—oh, do not ask about it! And if you ask, ask from Venus.

No one knew about that wedding, so the prophets were sent to spread the good news. (D 10340–41)

The way to God is exceedingly dreadful, blocked and full of snow. Muḥammad was the first person to risk his life, driving his horse in that way and opening the road. Whoever goes in this way does so through his guidance and regard. For he was the first person to open the way. He posted waymarks and set up stakes: "Do not go in this direction, do not go in that direction. If you go in that direction, you will perish like the people of Ad and Thamud.[5]

But if you go in this direction, you will be saved like the believers." The whole Koran is explaining this: *Within it are clear signs* (III 97), that is, "Upon these ways We have provided waymarks." . . .

So know that the guide is Muḥammad. God says, "Until someone first comes to Muḥammad, he cannot reach Us." In the same way, when you want to go someplace, first the intellect guides you, saying, "You should go to that place, that is in your best interest." Then your eyes lead you, then your limbs begin to move. These are the levels, even if the limbs have no knowledge of the eyes, and the eyes have no knowledge of the intellect. (F 225/232–233)

Once some monks complained before a great man in whom they had faith: "We endure more suffering and hardship than the Companions of the prophet Muḥammad, and we are farther apart from sensual desires. Yet we do not receive the graces they receive. Why not?"

That great man answered, "Knowledge of God's nature, ascetic practices, monkhood, detachment from this world, and the like are all the heritage and guidance of the prophets. Without their guidance, no one can gain knowledge of God, of proper conduct, and of the way to Him, since these things are their heritage. You have turned your backs on them; you had received all these blessings from them."

They said, "We accept and show gratitude toward the former prophets."

He replied, "Since they are a 'single soul,' to deny one of the prophets is to deny them all. . . . In reality, they are a single light from a single sun shining into the windows of their bodies' houses. Since you have opposed and denied one of those lights within this house of life, your bat-nature has been proven, and you are deniers. If a bat should say, 'I admit yesterday's sun and do not oppose it, but I am opposed to today's sun,' he must be told, 'Yesterday's sun and today's sun are not two. But yesterday's sun is now far from being able to test you.' In the same way, if a snake of the land says, ' I am a fish who swam in the water of yesterday's brook; I do not know this water,' he must be told, 'This is the same water, but the water that you think is different is not able to test your present situation.'" (MK 68: 74/148–149)

God said, *Journey in the land*! (III 137). Seek in the world, test your fortune and daily bread!

In gatherings seek amongst the intellects for an intellect like that possessed by the Prophet.

For the "heritage of the Prophet" is that alone. It sees unseen things from before and behind. (M VI 2616–18)

Intellect is a man's wings and feathers. If he lacks intellect, then let him find the intellect of a guide.

Be either triumphant, or in search of a triumphant man! Either possess Vision, or seek the Possessor of Vision!

Without the key of the intellect, knocking upon God's door is a result of self-will, not sound motives. (M VI 4075–77)

Whoever possesses a partial intellect is in need of instruction, but the Universal Intellect is the originator of all things. Those who have joined the partial intellect to the Universal Intellect so that the two have become one are the prophets and saints. (F 143/152)

God says, "The good-pleasure of these servants is Our good-pleasure, for We have concealed Our good-pleasure in theirs. If clever stratagems should allow you to climb the seven heavens, you will not find My good-pleasure. Like Iblis you will remain in the station of Severity. And if you should go down to the back of the Cow and the Fish in humility because of your own self-will and caprice, you will not find good-pleasure. 'My heavens and My earth encompass Me not, but the heart of My believing servant does encompass Me.' I have deposited My good-pleasure in their good-pleasure. Seek their good-pleasure, for the man of intellect and good-fortune is he who seeks for each thing where I have placed it."

Seek pearls from oysters, musk from gazelles, the heart from Men, and bluster from fools! (MK 2: 6/38)

2. IMITATIVE KNOWLEDGE AND REALIZED KNOWLEDGE

Since they are inwardly identified with the Universal Intellect, the prophets and saints have passed beyond the limitations of discursive knowledge and "rational thought," for these are the workings of the partial intellect. The prophets and saints do not seek for knowledge, since they themselves are its source; they know nothing of supposition and opinion, since they dwell in certainty and immediate vision. Their knowledge is true (*ḥaqīqī*) and "realized" (*taḥqīqī*), for it derives directly from the Source of all knowledge. It bubbles up within their breasts without the slightest effort on their part. But those who have not become identified with the Universal Intellect must acquire all of their knowledge from outside of themselves through "imitation" (*taqlīd*),

and most of what they learn remains in the realm of hearsay and opinion. As long as they imitate the prophets and saints, their knowledge is on the whole positive, but far below the human potential. Hence Rūmī spends much more time criticizing imitation than praising it.

> There is self-sacrifice, and there is knowledge. Some people have generosity and munificence, but not knowledge; others have knowledge, but no self-sacrifice. But if a person should have both, he will be mightily successful. Such a person is peerless. For example, a man is walking, but does not know whether he is following the road or has strayed from it. He walks blindly. Perhaps he will hear a rooster's call or find a sign of habitation. But how can he be compared with a person who knows the road? The latter has no need of signs and waymarks. He is the one who will carry through. So knowledge is more important than all else. (F 59/71)
>
> Hearsay is the lieutenant of vision; it is not for him who is present, but him who is absent.
>
> Whoever attains to vision has no more need for hearsay.
>
> When you sit together with your beloved, you can send away the go-betweens.
>
> Whoever passes beyond childhood and becomes a man has no more need for letters and emissaries.
>
> If he reads a letter, he does so to teach; and if he speaks, he wants to make something understood.
>
> But to speak on the basis of hearsay in the presence of those who have eyes is wrong, for it shows heedlessness and imperfection.
>
> Before him who has eyes, your profit lies in silence. That is why man is addressed by the words, *Be silent*! (VII 204). (M IV 2066–72)
>
> This sign on the road is for the traveler who becomes lost every moment in the desert.
>
> Those who have attained union have nothing but the inward eye and the divine lamp—they have been delivered of signs and roads.
>
> If the man in union has spoken of signs, he did so in order that those who are still disputing may understand.
>
> The father of the newborn child makes babbling sounds, though his intellect should encompass the world. (M II 3312–15)
>
> Whoever finds the way to vision in the spiritual retreat will never seek support from the sciences.

Since he has become the companion of the spirit's beauty, he is tired of hearsay and knowledge.

Vision dominates over knowledge. That is why this world prevails for the vulgar:

They see it as ready cash and look upon the next world as a debt. (M III 3856–59)

A hundred thousand followers of imitation and signs are thrown into the depths by a single affliction,

Since their imitation and reasoning—all their wings and feathers—depend upon opinion.

Vile Satan stirs up a doubt and throws these blind men down on their heads.

The leg of those who employ reasoning is wooden: A wooden leg is very unstable.

But look at the spiritual Pole of the time, the Possessor of Vision: The mountains themselves are astonished at his stability.

The blind man walks with a cane, which prevents him from falling headfirst on the ground.

Who is the knight that brings about the army's victory? For the people of religion, he is the Possessor of Vision.

The blind can only find the path with their canes if protected by those of illuminated eyes.

Were there no men of vision and spiritual kings, all the world's blind would be dead.

The blind do not plant, reap, build, trade, or yield profit.

Did God not show you mercy and bounty, the staff of your rational argument would break.

What is this cane? Rational arguments and demonstration. Who gave them the cane? The Seeing Mighty One. . . .

Oh circle of the blind, what are you doing? Bring a man of vision into your midst!

Seize the skirt of Him who gave you the cane! Remember what Adam suffered because of disobedience! (M I 2125–36, 39–40)

The imitator gives expression to a hundred proofs, but he speaks from discursive reasoning, not direct vision.

He is musk-scented but not musk; he smells like musk but is only dung. (M V 2470–71)

When man has no news of the color and state of his own spirit, let him give whatever answer he likes—in meaning he is asking a question. (D 4255)

Someone said in the presence of Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī, "I have established the existence of God through an incontrovertible proof!" The next morning Shams al-Dīn said, "Last night the angels came and were praying for that man. They said, 'Praise be to God! He has established the existence of our God! May God give him long life, for he has not been lacking in his service to mankind!'" You silly fool! God is established. His existence needs no proof. If you want to do something, then establish yourself in a spiritual station before Him. Otherwise, He is established without proof. *There is nothing that does not proclaim His praise* (XVII 44). (F 92/103–104)

That iniquitous man knows hundreds of superfluous matters in the sciences, but he does not know his own spirit.

He knows the properties of every substance, but in explaining his own substance he is like an ass.

"I know everything permitted and not permitted by the Divine Law." How is it you do not know if you yourself are permitted or an old crone?

You know that this is lawful and that is unlawful, but look carefully: Are you lawful or unlawful?

You know the value of every merchandise, but you do not know your own value—that is stupidity.

You know every auspicious and inauspicious star, but you do not look to see if you yourself are auspicious or dirty-faced.

The spirit of all the sciences is only this: to know who you will be on the Day of Resurrection. (M III 2648–54)

If you want your wretchedness to vanish, try to make your "wisdom" leave you,

That wisdom which is born of your lower nature and your fantasy, devoid of the effusion of the Almighty's Light.

The wisdom of this world increases opinion and doubt, the wisdom of religion soars beyond the heavens. (M II 3201–03)

The sciences of the Possessors of the Heart carry them aloft, the sciences of the people of bodies weigh them down.

When knowledge is revealed to the heart, it becomes an aid; but knowledge acquired by the body is a heavy load.

God said, *Like an ass carrying books* (LXII 5): Knowledge not from Him is a burden.

A knowledge not immediately from Him will soon vanish like paint on a woman's face. (M I 3446–49)

"Unlettered" has two meanings. First it denotes someone who cannot read or write; most of the time this is what people understand from the word. But for those who have realized the Truth, the "unlettered man" is he who writes *without* hand and pen everything that others write *with* hand and pen. Others tell of things that have once existed and have passed away, but he tells of the Unseen, the future, and that which has not yet arrived or come into existence.

> Every possessor of a spirit sees existent things, but he who sees what does not exist is someone else!

Oh Muḥammad! You were "unlettered" and an orphan. You had no father and mother to take you to school and teach you penmanship and skills. Where then did you learn these many thousands of sciences and knowledges? You have told of everything that has come into the world from the beginning of creation and existence. Step by step, you have described its journey. You have given news of its felicity and wretchedness. You have given signs of the garden of paradise, tree by tree, and described even the earrings of the houris. You have told of the prison of hell, its every pit and corner. You have lectured on the dissolution of the world, its end, and the Eternity that has no end. After all, from whom did you learn all this? Which school did you attend?

Muḥammad replies, "Since I had no one and was an orphan, that Someone of nobodies became my tutor and taught me, for *The All-Merciful taught the Koran* (LV 1–2). If a person wanted to learn this knowledge from the creatures, he would not be able to acquire it in hundreds of thousands of years. But if he did learn it, his knowledge would then be acquired and imitative. He would not possess its keys. It would be closed up, not having grown up by itself. It would be the outward picture of knowledge, not the reality and spirit of knowledge." Anyone can paint a picture on a wall. It has a head, but no intellect; an eye, but no sight; a hand, but no generosity; a breast, but no illuminated heart; a drawn sword, but no cutting edge. In any prayer-niche you can find the painting of a lamp. But when night comes, it gives no light.

They paint a tree on the wall, but if you shake it, no fruit will fall to the ground.

Even so, that picture on the wall is not completely without benefit. Imagine that someone was born in a prison and has never seen crowds of people and beautiful faces. And imagine that he sees paintings on the walls and doors of that prison—the forms of beautiful women, kings and brides, the luxurious trappings of sultans, thrones and crowns, banquets and parties, musicians and dancers. If he is familiar with these things because of his congeneity with them, he will investigate and finally come to understand that outside of the prison are a world and cities and beautiful forms like these, and that in that world trees like the ones painted here bear fruit. A fire will fall into his heart, for he will say, "There are such things in this world and I have been buried in the grave while still alive." He will raise a cry in prison, saying to its inhabitants,

> Oh people! Beware of these ephemeral things! Rise up, travel to the celestial world!
>
> The spirit has attained to perfection within your frame, yet you talk about your perishing body.
>
> Jesus sits before you, but out of stupidity your heart decides to serve his ass's hooves!
>
> Oh pure spirits! How long will you dwell in these piles of dust like rubbish and the people of hell?
>
> The trumpet of good fortune was blown some time ago: Oh you who were born of the living, lift your heads from this dust! (MS 28)

Your knowledge based on imitation and opinion has become a snare for bread, but the form of the Eye of Certainty is given by *The All-Merciful taught the Koran.* (D 7662)

Oh you who are thirsty and heedless, come! We are drinking the water of Khiḍr[6] from the stream: the speech of the saints.

If you do not see the water, act like a blind man: Bring a jug to the stream and dip it in.

For you have heard that there is water in the stream—the blind man must act in imitation.

Dip the waterskin, which is dreaming of water, into the stream, so that you may feel it become heavy.

When it becomes heavy, you will have attained guidance: At that moment your heart will be delivered from dry imitation.

If the blind man does not see the stream full of water with his eyes, yet when he feels his jug heavy he knows

That the water has entered the jug from the stream; for it had been light, but now it is heavy and full. (M III 4302–08)

Imitation in this journey is like a cane in your hand, but then the Way's splendor makes it into an all-conquering sword. (D 35167)

Between the realized saint and the imitator are great differences, for the former sings like David, while the latter is but an echo.[7]

The saint's words rise up out of burning passion, but the imitator has memorized some old sayings. (M II 493–494)

How should the infant on the Way have the thoughts of Men? How can his imaginings be compared with true realization?

Infants think about the nurse and milk, raisins and walnuts, crying and weeping.

The imitator is like a sick child, though he provide subtle arguments and proofs.

His profundity in proofs and difficult problems drives him away from spiritual insight.

He takes the collyrium of his spiritual consciousness and employs it in disputation. (M V 1287–91)

The accursed Satan makes the imitator meet great dangers from the road and highwaymen.

Once he sees God's Light he will be safe, his agitations and doubts will be stilled. . . .

When his eyes open and he reads the outward form, he will no longer be plagued by the devil. (M V 2450–51, 54)

The Sufi's book is not composed of ink and letters: It is naught but a heart white as snow.

The scholar's provisions are the marks of the pen. What are the Sufi's provisions? The footprints of the saints. (II 159–160)

My knowledge is substance, not accident. This precious thing is not to be used for every aim.

I am a mine of candy, a plantation of sugar cane—it grows up within me and I eat of it myself.

Only imitative and instructional knowledge laments at the aversion of the audience.

Its possessor acquired it as bait, not for the sake of illumination, so he is as bad as the man who seeks the knowledge of this vile world.

He seeks knowledge for the sake of the vulgar and the elect, not to gain deliverance from this world. . . .

The knowledge of discourse, which has no spirit, is in love with its customers' faces.

Though it is great during theoretical discussions, it dies and disappears when its customers go.

My customer is God, for He pulls me aloft: *God is the customer* (IX 111). (M II 2427–31, 36–38)

Know that in the presence of the spiritual Pole of the time, transmitted knowledge is like an ablution with sand in spite of water's presence. (M IV 1418)

Even if you are able to describe the Language of the Birds,[8] how can you discern what they want to say?

If you learn the call of a nightingale, what will you know of his love for the Rose?

And if you try to understand through reasoning and surmise, that will be like a deaf man's conjectures concerning the movements of a person's lips.

Someone said to that deaf man, "Your neighbor is sick."

The deaf man thought to himself, "How will I understand that young man's words with my heavy ears?

Especially now that he is sick and his voice is weak. But still I must go to visit him.

When his lips start to move, I will be able to reason out what he says.

When I say, 'How are you, oh my suffering friend?' He will say, 'Fine' or 'Not bad.'

I will say, 'Thanks be to God!' Then, 'What have you had to eat?' He will say, 'A sherbet' or 'Bean stew.'

I will say, 'May it increase your health! Which physician is caring for you?' He will reply, 'So-and-so.'

I will say, 'Oh, a very good doctor indeed! If he is coming, everything will be fine!

I have seen the results of his work, and wherever he goes, needs are well taken care of.'"

So the deaf man arranged these responses through reasoning and then went to see the patient.

"How are you?" he said. "Practically dead," came the reply. "Thanks be to God!"—so the patient became vexed and annoyed:

"What kind of thanksgiving is this? So he has been my enemy." The deaf man employed reasoning and missed the mark.

"What have you eaten?" "Poison," he said. "May it give you long life!" So the patient's anger increased.

Then came the question, "Which physician comes to treat you?"

"The angel of death," he said, "Now leave me alone!" "Oh, an auspicious doctor indeed! You should feel blessed!"

The deaf man left and said happily to himself, "Now I can go home and rest."

The patient said, "So he is my mortal enemy. I did not know he was so treacherous." . . .

That deaf man annulled a ten-year friendship through his reasoning.

Oh master! You must especially avoid the reasoning of the lower senses concerning that Revelation not bound by any limits.

Although the ear of your senses is capable of hearing words, your ear that perceives the Unseen is deaf.

The first to employ this silly reasoning in face of the Lights of God was Iblis.

He said, "Without doubt fire is better than earth, and I am made of fire, while Adam is made from dark-colored clay" (Koran VII 12). (M I 3357–76, 93–97)

Perhaps Rūmī's teachings concerning knowledge gained from books versus spiritual realization can be summarized by saying that we must travel the path to God ourselves and that books will not aid us in doing so, except insofar as they point us in the right direction. This helps to explain why Rūmī himself never wrote any systematic treatments of Sufism and why his poetry is meant mainly to encourage the reader to enter the Way. On the only occasion we know about when he was asked to write a treatise on Sufism—by a nobleman with whom he was on excellent terms—he answered as follows:

God opens doors

May everlasting felicity, eternal good fortune, and God's good pleasure unite with the auspicious days of the great dignitary, the pious ascetic, the high-born nobleman, the faithful and high-aspiring warrior, Ḥājjī Amīr—God prolong his blessings,

confirm him, and aid him. May God the All-high make his blessed and well-thinking breast a spring of inspirations and a source of graces. May the eyes of his friends be illumined and their desires achieved, and may his enemies be overcome by vengeance—by the rights of Muḥammad, upon whom be peace.

Behold my greetings and prayers, which are encumbent and mandatory—even more so for this old well-wisher. Know that hope and desire for your auspicious face and beloved countenance—which is the prelude to the grace of heaven—have overcome and incited me. May the Exalted Creator bring about an easy and quick cause for our meeting! For verily, He is the Originator of all causes.

You came late and left early—
coming late and leaving early is the work of flowers.

But I am certain that wherever you dwell, the pure element of angelic substance lies within your nature; it will keep you next to good and beautiful things and make you seek degrees with God and strive for the good pleasure of the Lord of the heavens.

Night is always night and day day,
a rosebush a rosebush, a leopard a leopard—
In whatever city he may reside a
bootmaker always makes boots.

Blessed He has made me, wherever I may be (XIX 31). In fact, every good, gentle, and virtuous spirit that dies to this world of generation and corruption and is transferred to the world of Reality will be busy there with the same work that occupied him here. "As you live, you shall die; and as you die, you shall be raised up"—and God's Messenger speaks the truth.

Through God's grant of success and the attraction of my dear friend's pure root, may you always be placing your feet upon the ladder of felicity—whether here or there, whether on the way or at the waystation. And may you be rushing toward the *mi'rāj* of proximity: May God make firm your feet!

Your eager well-wisher finds it difficult to be separated from your form. "A day I see you not is like a thousand months, a month I see you not a thousand years." "Congregation is a mercy, separation chastisement." May God join you and me and remove the distance from between us!

That same God who showed us the
way of separation—I hope He will make easy the way
of union.

Your lordship—may you ever remain my lord, master, support, and superior—commanded that I write two or

three lines that would contain the pillars and preconditions of traveling the Way and proceeding forward on the Straight Path.

Without doubt, bodily events and happenings are fewer and of less import than the events of the world within, yet thousands of books have been written on jurisprudence, guiding men in the manner of maintaining the pillars of outward conduct. But still, not enough works have been written; events take place outwardly whose remedy and cure have not been explained and cannot be found in all those books. Since the few outward, bodily events cannot be contained by a thematic girdle, which snaps because of the multiplicity and volume of constantly replenished outward states, how should I be able to explain the means of maintaining the pillars of the inward and internal states—which cannot be compared to the outward? Indeed, the outward states have been discussed in "two or three lines," but the ends of those lines cannot be found. One line deals with past states, a second with present states, and a third with future states. But whichever line you read, you will never reach its end. These three lines are written upon the tablet of the partial intellect, and are completely and fully explained on the tablet of the Universal Intellect. But the states of the inward, which are outside of those three lines—wonderful!—how does he expect them to be contained in three lines? For they are tremendously distant from "two" and "three"; they shun them totally.

So, my lordship—may you ever remain my lordship—God willing, you will be delivered from two and three and be able to keep watch over the successive and continually renewed states that arrive in the world of the inward. Then you will be new and fresh at every instant, and your imagination will be totally cut off from delimitation, apportionment, limit, and end.

Because of these meanings that have displayed themselves to this well-wisher, I am not able to fulfill your command to write two or three lines. That which I would like to speak about in this connection cannot be contained in written words, but can only be expressed orally, God willing. . . . (MK 48: 53–54/114–116)

3. THE ROLE OF THE SAINTS

When the Shadow of God becomes your nursemaid, you will be delivered from fantasy and its shadows.

The Shadow of God is His servant who is dead to this world and alive to Him.

Seize his skirt at once so that you may be delivered within the skirt of these last days.

How He has stretched out the shadow (XXV 45)—that shadow is the body of the saints, who are the guides to the light of God's Sun. (M I 422–425)

Although the words of the great saints appear in a hundred different forms, yet, since God is One and the Way is one, how should their words be two? They appear different in form, but they are one in meaning. In form there is diversity, in meaning all is concord.

For example, a prince orders a tent to be sewn. One person makes the rope, another prepares the stakes, another weaves the cloth, another stiches, another rends, another employs a needle. These forms are all different and diverse; but, united in meaning, they perform a single task. (F 46/57–58)

Look at those two partners washing clothes: Outwardly they are in conflict.

The one throws the garments into the water, but his partner dries them out.

Then the first makes them wet again, as though he were thwarting his opposite in a quarrel.

But these two opposites who seem to be quarreling are one in heart and work harmoniously at a single task.

Every prophet and every saint has his own spiritual method, but it leads to God: All are one. (M I 3082–86)

If the lamp seeks to rise on high, it does not do so for its own sake. Its purpose is for others to benefit, for them to receive a share of its light. Otherwise, wherever a light may be—whether above or below—it is the lamp, the everlasting sun. If the saints seek the position and rank of this world, they do so because people have not the vision to see their true station. They wish to hunt the people of this world with the snare of this world; thus the worldlings may find a different rank and fall into the next world's snare. (F 25/37)

In short, the saints transcend and are unneedful of "above" and "below" and the respect of the creatures. You yourself, if an atom of the ecstacy and a flash of the gentleness of that world should appear to you, at that moment you would become indifferent to "above" and "below,"

greatness and leadership, and even your own self, which is nearer to you than all other things. None of these would enter your mind. So how could the saints—who are the mine, the source, and the origin of that light and joy—be attached to "above" and "below"? Their pride is in God, and God is independent of "above" and "below." These two belong to us, who have heads and feet. (F 103/114)

I have heard that for ten years Joseph never slept at night. That prince kept on praying to God for the sake of his brothers:

"Oh God, if Thou forgivest them, so be it. But if not, then I will fill the world with mourning.

Punish them not, oh Lord, for they are full of regret for the sin that suddenly overtook them!"

Joseph's feet became blistered from his night vigils, his eyes full of pain from weeping and wailing.

The lamentation spread to the celestial spheres and the angels, and the Sea of Gentleness bubbled up and then broke the bonds.

Fourteen robes of honor arrived: "All fourteen of you are prophets, emissaries, and chiefs among My servants."

Such is the effort of the shaykhs night and day, in order to deliver the creatures from torment and corruption. (D 9788–94)

4. THE SHAYKH

Did not the prophets come for the sake of making (the Hidden Treasure) manifest? "Oh product of dust! You have a mine within yourself!

Though I was *only a mortal like you* (XVIII 111) in body, now my station is that of a treasure, of which you possess but a single golden grain.

I am your heart: Seek not your heart from yourself, seek it from me! If your fortune is young, become the disciple of the shaykh, the old man.

If you consider yourself other than me, then you do not know yourself; you are full of suffering and tribulation.

Come, you are part of me! Separate not the part from the whole! Cling to your whole, for it is great! . . .

Proofs are of no profit to you—I am the proof! Without me, you will not be delivered, though you offer a myriad proofs." (D 32894–98, 900)

Who is the shaykh? The old man, that is, he who has white hair. Know the meaning of this hair, oh you who have lost hope!

Black hair is self-existence. A single hair of this self-existence must not remain.

When no self-existence remains, he is an "old man," even if his hair is black or grizzled.

That black hair is the attribute of human nature, not of the beard and the head.

In the cradle Jesus raises a cry: "Without having become a youth, I am a shaykh and an old man!"[9]

If a person has only been delivered from a few of his human attributes, he is not a shaykh, he is middle-aged.

When not a single black hair, not one of his own attributes, remains, then he is a shaykh and accepted by God. (M III 1790–96)

The shaykh is the "old man" through the intellect, oh youth, not through whiteness of beard and head.

Indeed, how could anyone be older than Iblis—but if someone has no intellect, he is nothing. . . .

Since the imitator knows naught but evidence, he keeps on looking for a path in outward signs.

For his sake we have said, "If you want to remedy your ills, choose a shaykh,

Someone who has escaped from imitation's veil and sees things as they are with the Light of God.

His pure light, without evidence or exposition, splits open the shell and enters the kernel.

For him who sees only the outward, true and false coin are the same—how should he know the inside of the sack? . . .

Strive so that you become an old man of intellect and religion, so that like the Universal Intellect, you behold the inward. (M IV 2163–64, 67–71, 78)

Do not entrust your hand for initiation to any but the shaykh, for his hand alone is backed by God.

The old man of your intellect has become accustomed to childishness by being the neighbor of the ego, which is naught but a veil.

Make your intellect the companion of the Intellect of a perfect shaykh, so that your intellect may return from its bad habits. . . .

When you place your hand in the hand of the shaykh—the old man of wisdom who is knowing and venerable,

Who is the prophet of his own time, oh disciple, so that within him the light of the Prophet shines—

Then you are present at Hudaybiyyah, and you are a fellow of those Companions of the Prophet who swore the oath.[10] (M V 736–738, 41–43)

The Prophet said, "I am like a ship in the storm of Time.

I and my Companions are like the ark of Noah: Whoever seizes hold will find illumination."

When you are with a shaykh, you are far from ugliness, traveling night and day in a ship.

Protected by the spirit of a spirit-bestower, you sleep in the ship and travel forward.

Do not break with the prophet of your time! Do not rely on your own skills and footsteps!

Though you be a lion, if you travel the Path without a guide, you will be a self-seer, astray and contemptible.

Beware! Fly only with the shaykh's wings so that you may behold the aid of his armies!

At one moment the wave of his gentleness becomes your wing; at the next, his severity's fire carries you forward.

Do not imagine that his severity is the opposite of his gentleness—behold the unity of these two in their effects! (M IV 538–546)

5. THE MIRROR OF GOD

The coming of Shams-i Tabrīzī to Konya transformed Rūmī's outward life and eventually crystallized his poetic genius. Although Shams was not Rūmī's spiritual master in the ordinary sense, he did play the role of shaykh for Rūmī in at least one important respect: He was the mirror in which Rūmī contemplated God's Perfection. In the verses where Rūmī praises Shams, and to a lesser degree Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Zarkūb and Ḥusām al-Dīn Chalabī, we can understand the depth to which the disciple must be devoted to the shaykh and the station of sanctity that the true shaykh should have attained. For in the shaykh, the Attributes of the Hidden Treasure are displayed openly—though few people are qualified to see them.

Were the wine of love consumed by the animal spirit, Shams al-Dīn's love would be spread throughout the world, shared equally by all.

Were his love not immersed in the lights of God's Jealousy, it would become the jewel of man's spirit and soul.

Were his banquet not spread outside of both worlds, his cup would rain wine on earth like the clouds of spring.

Indeed, what are spring clouds next to his bounty's ocean? His wine's crashing waves fill the space from Mount Qāf to Mount Qāf.[11]

Were his face not hidden by God's Jealousy, how would the sun and the moon have courage to shine?

Were his beauty to quarrel with the world's most comely faces, beautiful Joseph would remain in prison for all eternity. (D 29572–78)

A sugar-lipped sweetheart brought news, "A caravan has come from Egypt!

A hundred camels, all sugar and candy—oh Lord, what a fine gift!

A candle has come at midnight! A spirit has entered a corpse!"

I said, "Speak plainly!" She said, "You-know-who has come."

My heart flew up in joy and placed a ladder at the intellect's edge.

It rushed to the roof in its love, seeking a tangible sign of that good news.

Suddenly from the housetop it saw a world outside of our world—

An all-encompassing ocean in a jug, a heaven in the form of dust.

Upon the roof sat a king wearing the clothes of a watchman,

An infinite garden and paradise within that gardener's breast.

His image traveled from breast to breast explaining the Sultan of the heart.[12]

Oh image of that king, flee not from my eyes! Renew my heart for a moment!

Shams-i Tabrīzī has seen No-place and built from it a place. (D *2730*)

I keep on seeing a moon in my eyes outside of my eyes, but the eyes have not seen him, nor have the ears heard news of him.

From the moment I first looked furtively at that face, I have seen neither tongue, spirit, nor heart except in selflessness.

If Plato had seen the beauty and loveliness of that moon, he would have become madder than I and more distraught.

Eternity is the mirror of temporality and temporality of Eternity: In that mirror, these two are intertwined like his two tresses.

Beyond sense perception is a cloud whose rain is all spirit—what rains have rained as largesse upon the dust of his body!

The moon-faced beauties of heaven have seen the reflection of his face—ashamed at his beauty, they scratch their heads in wonder.

Eternity-without-beginning grasped the hand of Eternity-without-end and together they went to the palace of that moon. Jealously looked at the two and laughed:

"Around his palace what lions have come out of jealousy, roaring for the blood of the self-sacrificers and the sincere."

Suddenly I asked, "Who is that king?" "Shams al-Dīn, the king of Tabriz," and my blood began to boil. (D *2293*)

Oh mouthpiece of God! Oh eye of the Realities! Oh thou who deliverest the creatures from this ocean full of fire!

Thou art a very ancient shaykh, a king unparalleled! Take the spirit by the hand and free it from the affliction of its attachments!

In the way of self-sacrifice, thou huntest for spirits. Alas, which of these spirits are worthy to be thy prey?

Who indeed is the creature to brag of love for thee? Oh, the light of the Creator's Majesty is in love with thy beauty.

You say, "What am I to do, for I am the prey of his love? I am distressed and lovesick"—oh, thou art a skillful physician!

Thy gentleness says, "Come forward!" Thy severity says, "Go back!" Let me know at once, which of them speaks the truth?

Oh sun of the spirits! Oh Shams of Tabriz, sun of God! Every ray of thy sunbeams is a subtle and eloquent spirit! (D *1310*)

Can the intellect perceive thee, or love, or the pure spirit? Does the Guarded Tablet know thee, do the angels in heaven?[13]

Do Gabriel or Jesus or Moses even see thee in their dreams? Is the celestial sphere worthy to be thy abode, or the Lote Tree of the Far Boundary?

Moses' Mount Sinai has become blood many times in love's madness, because an echo of Lord Shams al-Dīn's fame fell upon it.

The Jealousy of the One has woven radiance upon radiance over his face. Muḥammad's spirit shouts, "Oh, how I desire to meet him!"[14]

God's Jealousy would burn the two worlds to a cinder if a single hair of his beauty were to appear to us without veil.

His beauty has shone forth from behind a hundred thousand veils. The spirit has fallen to shouting, "Welcome, oh king, welcome!"

The elegant cypress has bent itself double in prostrating itself before Tabriz; tiny Suhā shines forth over Tabriz like a sun. (D *144*)

From the day the drunkards first felt the need for more wine, the shaykh has held the cup of the spirit in his hands.

Like dustmotes, we dance before him each morning—such is the custom of sun-worshipers.

Until Eternity-without-end his sun's face will display dawn after dawn, transmuting hearts of stone into precious rubies.

Oh Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, oh "Rectitude of the Religion" and the heart, thou art outside of the six directions—otherwise, how hast thou made them all so luminous?

How could he who is thy love's slave be cold in love for God? For the rectitude of the religion and the heart is a burning fire!

If you need a heart, seek the pleasure of his heart! But how should the heavy-spirited man seek his heart?

Oh, many a faith has become unbelief without him! Oh, many an unbelief has become faith through his blessing!

You see that an ash heap is black-faced and black-hearted—so whatever it says about that mine of gems is slander!

Shams-i Tabrīzī! Thou art the king of all men of beautiful spirits! Perhaps Joseph of Canaan can rival thee in beauty. (D *797*)

6. REJECTING THE PROPHETS AND SAINTS

Oh you with unwashed face! What are you doing? Whom are you fighting and envying?

You are playing with a lion's tail; you are charging like a Turcoman, but at the angels!

Why do you call utter goodness "evil"? Beware! Consider not your lowliness exaltation!

What is evil? The needy, despicable copper. Who is the shaykh? The infinite elixir.

Even if the copper is not receptive to the elixir, it will never be able to make the elixir into copper like itself.

What is evil? A rebel that acts like fire. Who is the shaykh? The very Sea of Eternity-without-beginning.

Fire always dreads water, but how should water fear flames?

You find fault in the face of the moon, you pluck thorns in paradise.

If you enter paradise looking for thorns, you will find none there but yourself. (M II 3340–48)

The deniers are their own enemies: By denying, they keep on wounding themselves.

An enemy is a man who tries to take your life, not one who takes his own.

The pitiful, veiled bat is its own enemy, not the sun's.

The sun's shining will kill it—but how can it annoy the sun?

An enemy is one who inflicts torment, who bars the ruby from glowing with light.

But the unbelievers all bar themselves from the radiance of the prophets' gem.

How can people veil the eyes of those unique men? No, they make their own eyes blind and perverse,

Like an angry Hindu slave who kills himself to spite his master,

Throwing himself down from the roof of the house to inflict on him a heavy loss.

If the patient becomes the physician's enemy, if the child becomes hostile to his teacher,

In reality they waylay their own roads—they themselves have wasted their own lives and intellects.

If a washerman becomes angry with the sun, if a fish becomes angry with the ocean,

Look and see who loses! In the end, who will suffer misfortune?

If God has created you with an ugly face, beware! Add not to it an ugly disposition! (M II 789–802)

Try not to understand the work of the pure saints by comparing them with yourself, even if "milk" (*shīr*) and "lion" (*shīr*) are written in the same way.

By such comparisons all the world's inhabitants have gone astray—few have gained awareness of God's saints.

They hold themselves up as equal to the prophets, imagining that the saints are just like themselves.

They say, "Look: We are human and they are human, both of us must eat and sleep."

Out of blindness they do not know that between them is an infinite difference. . . .

Both kinds of gazelle consume water and herbs: the one turns them into dung, the other into musk.

Both kinds of reed drink the same water, but one is empty, the other full of sugar.

Behold hundreds of thousands of similar pairs; behold a difference between the two of a seventy-year journey.

This person eats food and gives out filth; the other also eats, but his food is transformed entirely into the Light of God.

This one eats and gives birth to avarice and envy; the other eats and gives birth only to love for the One. (M I 263–267, 69–73)

When you make a veil out of yellow glass, you will see the sun's light as yellow.

Break those blue and yellow glasses so that you may discern the man from the dust.

Around the horseman dust has arisen; you imagine the dust to be the man of God.

Iblis saw the dust and said, "How should this offspring of clay be superior to me with my fiery brow?"

As long as you see the saints as men, know that you have inherited your vision from Iblis. (M I 3958–62)

Whoever looks upon spiritual men with the eyes of his own weakness—you must laugh at his two crooked eyes! (D 21107)

In the last analysis, the element of congeneity determines how a person will react to the prophets and saints. Light is attracted to light, fire to fire. To him whose intellect dominates his ego, the prophets and saints will appear as celestial messengers of felicity, the embodiments of the Universal Intellect. But if a man's ego dominates his intellect, he will see the prophets and saints as messengers of suffering and ugliness, since their light will appear to him as the negation of his own ego's substance. Hence his ego will see the light of their gentleness as the fire of severity and wrath. In short, the prophets and saints appear as mirrors to those who look at them. The man of intellect sees light, the man of ego fire.

The saint's own bodily form has been annihilated and he has become a mirror; within it are reflected the faces of others.

If you spit, you spit in your own face; if you strike the mirror, you strike yourself.

If you see an ugly face, that is you; and if you see Jesus and Mary, that is you.

He is neither this nor that, he is plain: He has set your own reflection before you. (M IV 2140–43)

7. FALSE MASTERS

A disciple who is trained by a man of God will have a pure and purified spirit. But he who is trained by an imposter and hypocrite and who learns theory from him will be just like him: despicable, weak, incapable, morose, without any exit from uncertainties, and deficient in all his senses. *As for the unbelievers—their protectors are idols, that bring them forth from the light into the shadows* (II 257). (F 33/44)

You are the disciple and guest of someone who in his vileness will steal away all your attainments.

He is not victorious—how will he make you victorious? He will not give you light, he will make you dark.

Since he has no light, how can others receive light through associating with him?

Like a blind man who cures eyes: With what will he anoint your eyes other than wool? . . .

He has no scent or trace of God, but his claims are greater than those of Seth or Adam.

The devil himself is embarassed to appear before him; he keeps on saying, "We are of the saints and even greater."

He steals many of the words of the dervishes, so that people may think he really is someone.

In his talks he even cavils at Bāyazīd; Yazīd himself is ashamed of him.[15]

He is destitute of the bread and provisions of heaven: God has not thrown him a single bone. . . .

For years disciples have gathered at his door, depending on his promise of a tomorrow that never comes.

It takes time for the inward nature of man to become apparent in his great and small affairs:

Does a treasure lie under the wall of the body, or do snakes, ants, and dragons make it their abode?

When it finally becomes clear that he was nothing, the seeker's life has passed: How will the knowledge profit him then? (I 2265–68, 72–76, 79–82)

Since there is many an Iblis with the face of Adam, you must not entrust your hand for initiation to every hand. . . .

The vile man steals the words of the dervishes in order to cast a spell upon simple minds.

The work of Men is light and warmth, the work of the vile, deception and shamelessness. (M I 316, 19–20)

Since a group of people have bought my words, the old rag sewers have all gone to work.

In order to set themselves up against me they have all washed their beards; but their envy displays their dirty faces.

By day they make blandishments like fair maidens, by night they repeat their lines like frogs.

Thanks be to God that my voice has made these sleepers abandon their slumber and stay awake—

But would they were staying awake for His sake, that all their lamentation were not for the sake of silver and gold!

How can they restore the sick to ruddy complexions? For they are all yellow like gold coins.

How can they deliver the creatures from envy? For envy has made them all ill.

Those kings that have come for the sake of vision are like an illuminated eye in men's hearts.

Like the seven planets their light is but one, like the five fingers they perform a single task.

Not wanting people to mock them, these fools show themselves as all turbans and beards.

The People of the Heart are the sun, the people of clay the dust in the air; the former are the rose, the latter the thorn.

Grieve not, oh prince, because of these fools—the People of the Heart are heart-bestowers and heart-pleasers. (D *817*)

Shame on the world's inhabitants, shame! Look at these ignorant, unmanly thieves!

In their fine exterior you see ascetics, but inwardly—God does not inhabit the house!

For two farthings one can buy three or four assloads of these big ducks! (D *1163*)

C.

The Discipline of the Way

Allusion has already been made to a basic goal of the spiritual path: the subjugation of the ego by the intellect. Man's fundamental problem is that he does not perceive things the way they truly are. Since he sees form and not meaning, he falls under the spell of the enchantress, this world. But the touchstone world is not at fault, man's vision is defective; he must begin the task of dispelling illusion within himself.

> The "sword of religion" is he who enters combat for religion's sake and whose efforts are totally for God. He discerns correct from incorrect and truth from falsehood. But, he first struggles with himself and rectifies his own character traits. As the Prophet said, "Begin with your own self!" (F 171/179)

Everything man can possibly wish to possess is contained within himself. Made in God's image, he embraces all of His Attributes. Man's perfected heart is God's Throne, but his ego is the veil which prevents him from seeing his true Self. Until the veil is lifted, he will remain in ignorance and error.

> The great scholars of the age split hairs in all the sciences. They have gained total knowledge and complete mastery of things that have nothing to do with them. But that which is important and closer to him than anything else, namely his own self, this your great scholar does not know. (F 17/30)

Wretched humanity! Not knowing his own self, man has come from a high estate and fallen into lowliness!

He has sold himself cheaply; he was satin, yet he has sewn himself onto a tattered cloak. (M III 1000–01)

If you could only see your own beauty—for you are greater than the sun! Why are you withered and shrivelled in this prison of dust?

Why not become fresh from the gentlenesses of the heart's spring? Why not laugh like a rose? Why not spread perfume? . . .

Why is your Jacob deprived of the lightning of your beautiful face? Hey, oh lovely Joseph! Why remain at the bottom of the well? (D 26412–13, 15)

A basket full of bread sits on your head, but you beg for crusts from door to door.

Attend to your own head, leave aside dizzyness! Go, knock upon the heart's door! Why keep on knocking from door to door?

Up to your knees in the stream's water, you are heedless of yourself and seek a drink from this person and that. (M V 1073–75)

Would that you could know yourself for a time! Would that you would see a sign of your own beautiful face!

Then you would not sleep in water and clay like an animal: You would go to the house of joy of all lovely spirits.

You would travel to your every far corner to make yourself manifest, for a Hidden Treasure has remained concealed within you!

Were you only this body, you would have no news of the spirit; were you only this spirit, you would rest happily within it.

Like others you would make do with good and evil, you would manage with this and that—if, that is, you were only this and that.

Were you only one stew, you would have a single flavor; were you only one pot, you would boil in just one way.

Were you to be purified of this churning agitation, you would reside on top of the heavens like those who are pure.

To every image of your own imagination you say, "Oh, my spirit, my world!" Were these images to disappear, you yourself would be the spirit and the world.

Enough, for your words have become intellect's shackle! If not for words, you would be nothing but tongue, like the Universal Intellect.

Enough, for knowledge is a veil upon knowledge—if you knew that you are the King, why would you remain the interpreter? (D *3003*)

1. SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Rūmī does not discuss explicitly the everyday discipline and rule followed by the Sufis on the spiritual path. He describes the fruits of the inward transformation that man undergoes in great detail, but he does not give precise instructions—as might be given, for example, in a manual on Yoga—concerning the spiritual practices which help to bring about this transformation. Such instructions were only transmitted orally from master to disciple, and even systematic works on Sufi practice have little to say about actual "techniques."

However this may be, a great deal may be gleaned from Rūmī's works about the general outline of the discipline followed by himself and his devotees. In general, Sufi practice begins with the performance of the ritual injunctions of the Sharī'ah or Divine Law, which is followed by all Moslems. In other words, the Sufis take for granted man's obligation to perform the "pillars" of Islamic practice, such as the five daily prayers, the fast during Ramadan, etc. These things, after all, are the Sunnah or Wont of the Prophet, and as he said, "The Way is my acts." But the Sufis do not limit themselves to those elements of the Prophet's Sunnah codified in the Sharī'ah. They emphasize a deeper understanding of the *meaning* of the ritual, as opposed to its form; and they add other practices recommended by the Koran and the Prophet but not made encumbent upon all believers. In this connection the fundamental Sufi practice, for Rūmī as for all Sufi masters, is the "remembrance" (*dhikr*, *yād*) of God, which is urged in numerous Koranic verses and prophetic sayings.

One of the root meanings of the word *dhikr* is "to mention," and the "remembrance of God" referred to in the Koran signifies equally the "mention"—or the "invocation"—of God's Name. As taught by the Prophet and as handed down through the chains (*silsilah*) of Sufi masters, "remembrance" is the systematic repetition of one of God's Names with the aim of achieving constant awareness of Him. At the highest stages of the spiritual path, the remembrance, "he who remembers" (*dhākir*) and "He who is remembered" (*madhkūr*) are one and the same, for no multiplicity remains. In short, remembrance or invocation is the central spiritual technique of Sufism, but always under the guidance of a shaykh, who alone can grant the disciple the right and the spiritual receptivity to invoke the Name of God in a

systematic fashion. Regular invocation of a Name of God without a shaykh's permission involves an affirmation of the desires of the ego and the sin of pride, and no positive result can be achieved on such a basis.

All spiritual discipline assumes faith on the part of him who practices it. In Arabic, the word "faith" (*īmān*) derives from a root signifying "to become secure." In the Moslem consciousness, faith is connected primarily with knowledge and only secondarily with the will and the emotions. As we have already seen, Rūmī describes the "believer"—*mu'min*, "he who has faith"—as dominated by the intellect and irradiated by the Light of God. So "faith" and "belief" have none of the overtones of irrationality connected with the word "belief" in English. What Moslems understand by it, as can be seen in the passages quoted below, is "becoming secure in the knowledge of God." It is the beginning of certainty.

A man of faith must practice his convictions. For Rūmī, this practice is the "Greater Holy War," a term derived from the famous saying of the Prophet when he returned to Medina from one of the early battles: "I have returned from the lesser holy war to the Greater Holy War." One should note here the close relationship between the following terms, all of which are derived from the same root: *jihād* ("holy war"), *mujāhadah* ("spiritual combat"), *jahd* ("effort") and *ijtihād* ("striving"). Linguistically the second term bears practically the same meaning as the first, since they are two different forms of the same verbal noun. But as a technical term in Sufism "spiritual combat" is employed synonomously with "ascetic practice" (*riyāḍat*) to denote all the practices the disciple undertakes on the way of self-purification and spiritual realization, whereas "holy war" refers to both the outward and inward war against the unbelievers, or spiritual practice in a more general sense. The third and fourth terms denote in a still more general sense the striving and personal initiative necessary on the Way.

Among the specific acts of spiritual warfare and ascetic practice which Rūmī refers to are companionship with the Sufis, reduced intake of food, fasting, invocation/remembrance, and nightly vigil. Like so many other Sufis, Rūmī is well known for his own practice of the last of these, and he wrote many poems of his *Dīwān* praising it and encouraging others to practice it. At nighttime, while others sleep, one can be alone with God and devote one's full attention to Him.

> Without doubt man is compounded of a body that is base, base, base; and a spirit that is noble, noble, noble. God the Exalted brought these two together through His perfect Power. A hundred thousand wisdoms are manifested from that noble spirit, and a hundred thousand darknesses from this gross body. That is why God said to the angels, See,

I am creating a mortal of clay. When I have shaped him and breathed My Spirit into him, fall you down, prostrating yourselves to him (XXXVIII 72–3). He connected the body to dark clay and the spirit to the breath of His own Spirit, so that the light and divine Breath would make this dark clay its instrument for righteousness, justice, and guarding God's Trust; so that it might be a means of salvation, elevation, and high degrees. The purpose was not that the dark clay, through its greed for the light of *I breathed My spirit into him*, should make the lamp its instrument for treachery and theft.

When a thief comes with a lamp,
he takes the better goods.

On the contrary, that lamp and candle of the Breath-Spirit should illuminate the clay of the body with the light of religion and hold it back from its greed for clay, ignorance, and heaviness. "So he whose intellect dominates his sensuality is higher than the angels, and he whose sensuality dominates his intellect is lower than the beasts." (MK 95: 99/ 189–190)

Someone asked what is more excellent than the ritual prayer.

The master replied that one answer is the spirit of the ritual prayer, as already explained in detail (v. F 11–12/ 24). A second answer is that faith is better than the ritual prayer. For the prayer must be performed five times a day, while faith is continual. The prayer may be omitted for a valid excuse, and in certain circumstances it may be postponed. This is another superiority of faith: It cannot be omitted for any excuse, and under no circumstances may it be postponed. Faith without the prayer is beneficial, but there is no benefit in the prayer without faith, as for example in the case of hypocrites. Moreover, in every religion the ritual prayer is different, but faith does not change in any of them—its inward states, its kiblah, and so forth are all the same. (F 32/43)

One of the chief disciples said: In former times, the unbelievers worshiped idols and prostrated themselves to them. Today we do the same thing. We go before the Mongols and prostrate ourselves and show all kinds of respect to them. Then we consider ourselves Moslems! And we have many other idols within ourselves, such as greed, self-will, spite, and envy, and we obey them all. Therefore, outwardly and inwardly we act the same as the idolworshipers, but we consider ourselves Moslems!

The master answered: But there is one more thing. Since all these things come into your mind, they are

bad and cannot be approved of. But without doubt, the eye of your heart has seen some tremendous, ineffable, and inscrutable thing that lets you see these things as ugly and shameful. Salty water appears salty to someone who has drunk fresh water. "Things become clear through their opposites." So God has placed the light of faith in your spirit, which then sees these things as ugly. After all, they appear ugly in relation to something beautiful. If this is not the case, why do not others have this pain? Why are they happy in what they are doing and say, "What we have is the important thing"? (F 77/89)

Do you not see that, at the time of Pharoah, when Moses' staff became a serpent and the staffs and cords of the sorcerers became serpents, he who had no discernment saw them all in the same light and made no distinction? But he who had discernment understood the difference between truth and sorcery. So he became a believer through discernment. Hence we understand that faith is discernment. (F 146–147/155)

The believer is he who knows that behind this wall there is Someone who is aware of every single one of our states. He sees us, even if we do not see Him. For the believer this has become a certainty. In contrast another person says, "No, this is only a tale," and has no faith. The day is coming when God will box his ears and he will be sorry. He will say, "Alas! I said an evil thing! I was wrong! It was indeed all He, but I denied Him!"

For instance, you are playing the rebeck and know that I am behind the wall. For certain you will keep on playing. You will not stop, for you are a rebeck-player. After all, the purpose of this ritual prayer is not that you should stand and bow and prostrate yourself all day long. Its purpose is that you should possess continuously that spiritual state which appears to you in prayer: Whether asleep or awake, writing or reading, in all your states you should never be empty of the remembrance of God; rather, you should be one of *those who are constantly at their prayers* (LXX 23). (F 174/182–183)

You say, "Night and day I perform the ritual prayer." How is it, oh brother, that your words themselves are not a ritual prayer? (D 31532)

Although the ritual prayer is an excellent act, its spirit and meaning are more excellent than its form, just as man's spirit is more excellent and more subsistent than his form; for man's form does not remain, but his spirit does. In

the same way, the form of the ritual prayer does not remain, but its meaning and spirit do, just as God has said: *Those who are constantly at their prayers* (LXX 23). . . .

Thus the jurisprudent explains the form of the ritual prayer: "You begin it with 'God is greatest' and you end it with 'Peace be upon you.'" But the Sufi explains the spirit of the prayer: "Ritual prayer is union with God such that none knows him who performs it but God Himself." The precondition for the form of the prayer is purification with water; but the precondition for prayer's spirit is that you turn your eyes and heart into blood for forty years through the spiritual combat of the Greater Holy War, and that you pass beyond seventy veils of darkness and come alive through the Life and Existence of God. (MK 19: 23/66–67)

The prophets and saints do not avoid spiritual combat. The first spiritual combat they undertake in their quest is the killing of the ego and the abandonment of personal wishes and sensual desires. This is the Greater Holy War. (F 130/140–141)

The suffering of that world is beyond the limits of description; compared to that, all suffering in this world is easy.

Happy is he who wages the Holy War, who chastises his body and gives it its due.

Wishing to be delivered from the suffering of that world, he assumes the painful burden of worship in this world. (M II 2472–74)

This one is the Greater Holy War, that other the lesser; both are the work of heroes like Rustam and 'Alī.[16]

They are not the work of him whose intellect and sobermindedness jump from his body at the twitch of a mouse's tail.

A person like that should be far from the lines of battle and the spears, like women. (M V 3802–04)

Your ego is causing your sins to increase; it used to be a worm—now it has become a dragon.

By night a corpse, it eats unlawful food; by day its belly full, it thieves and talks nonsense.

Go, seek justice from a prince, a standard bearer, a man of vision.

The land is never empty of God's caliph: How could there be creatures without a Lord?

The world is ill in its confusion, without justice, punishment, or a banner of authority.

The final medicine for the world's illness and malady is the sword.

The time for the Greater Holy War has come! Arise, oh Sufi! Enter the battle!

Cut the throat of sensuality with hunger! Fret not over stew!

The dervish gives away his body and spirit: This is the principle of every generous act.

Place them in the fire, for fire is an alchemy that transforms the unripe. (D 36113–22)

Bounty for the body makes you unripe, but the body's affliction matures you. Until you undergo the affliction of religion, you will not win the good fortune of faith. (D 25928)

Only godfearingness, religion, and piety are of any use: Through them you gain prosperity in the two worlds. (M VI 264)

Vileness, evil, and bad moral qualities veil the human substance. Removing these veils is impossible without a great deal of spiritual combat. Acts of spiritual combat are of many kinds, the greatest of which is mixing with companions who have turned their faces toward God and their backs toward this world. No act of spiritual combat is more difficult than to sit with sound companions, for the very sight of them wastes away the ego and annihilates it. That is why it is said, "When a snake sees no human being for forty years, it becomes a dragon"—in other words, when man sees no one who can cause his evil qualities to waste away. (F 234/241)

Man must cleanse all ulterior motives from his faculty of discernment and seek companions in religion. "Religion" is to recognize companions. (F 8/20)

Go, oh heart, go with the caravan! Go not alone over the stages of the way, for pregnant Time gives birth to temptations. (D 24227)

In short, be a companion of the congregation—like a sculptor, carve a companion even out of stone,

For the caravan's multitude and throng will break the backs and spears of the highwaymen. (M II 2150–51)

Whoever wants to sit with God, let him sit in the presence of the saints.

If you cut yourself off from their presence, you will be lost, a part without your whole.

If the devil separates you from the noble saints, he will find you without friends and devour your head.

To travel one instant without the congregation, even for a single span, results from Satan's deception—know this well! (M II 2163–66)

Whether we speak of joy or heartache, let us sit as a congregation and speak together.

Should our companion travel far, we will do the same; should he move less, so will we.

Let us and our companions have the same heart and breath and attack Rustam's battlelines like fire!

Though we be men, traveling alone we will achieve only lamentation and mourning, like women.

If we go on the hajj without companions, we will surely not reach the Kaaba.

We are the strings of a harp—as parts of it, let us sing high and low!

We were all in Adam's congregation, let us return together to Adam!

Our point is hidden—Adam is but an expedient: Let us pitch our tents on the shore of the Greatest Ocean!

When the Solomon of Subsistence comes to His Throne, we will kiss His signet ring a hundred thousand times. (D *1671*)

The Prophet said, "The night is long, so shorten it not with your sleep; the day is bright, so darken it not with your sins." The night is long for you to voice your secrets and ask your needs without the disturbance of people. When friends and enemies are not around to annoy you, you can achieve privacy and contentment. God pulls down this veil so that your acts may be protected and guarded from hypocrisy—so that they may be accomplished sincerely for Him alone. In the dark of night, the hypocrite is distinguished from the sincere believer and is disgraced. Things are hidden by night and become disgraced only by daylight. But the hypocrite is disgraced by the night. (F 60/71–72)

By your spirit, leave not the work at hand! Sleep not! Subtract one night from your life and maintain the vigil: Sleep not!

You have slept a thousand nights for the sake of your own self-will: What of a single night? For the sake of the Friend, sleep not!

For the sake of that Gentle Friend who sleeps not by night, do the same! Entrust your heart to Him and sleep not!

Fear that night of illness when, until daytime, you lament and groan piteously, "Oh Lord! Oh Lord!"—sleep not!

That night when Death comes and says, "Welcome!"—by the bitterness of that night, oh traveler, sleep not!

Stones melt before those chains of awesomeness: If you are not a stone, then remember those chains and sleep not!

Although night is a lovely black-skinned saki, take not her cup and fear the morning after: Sleep not!

God said, "At night My friends do not sleep." If you are embarassed and ashamed at His words, sleep not!

Fear that tremendously terrible night with no refuge: Make night your provision on the way and beware—sleep not!

You have heard that the saints find their desire at night; for the love of that King who satisfies desires, sleep not!

When your kernel dries out, He will give you a fresh kernel—you will become all kernel, oh hopeful man, so sleep not!

I have told you a thousand times: Be silent! But you do not benefit. Bring one and take a hundred thousand in return—sleep not! (D *312*)

What hidden sweetness is found in this empty stomach! Man is like a lute, neither more nore less:

When the lute's stomach is full, it cannot lament, whether high or low.

If your brain and stomach burn from fasting, their fire will draw constant lamentation from your breast.

Through that fire you will burn a thousand veils at every instant—you will ascend a thousand degrees on the Way and in your aspiration.

Keep your stomach empty! Lament like a flute and tell your need to God! Keep your stomach empty and speak of the mysteries like a reed!

If you keep your stomach full, it will bring Satan to you at the Resurrection instead of your intellect, an idol instead of the Kaaba.

When you fast, good character traits gather round you like servants, slaves, and retinue.

Continue your fasting, for it is Solomon's seal: Give not the seal to the devil, disrupt not your kingdom.

And if your kingdom and army should flee from you, your army will return, so raise the banner!

The Spread Table has come from heaven to those who fast, for Jesus son of Mary has called it down with his prayers.[17]

Await the Table of Generosity in your fast—the Table of Generosity is better than cabbage stew! (D *1739*)

2. REMEMBRANCE OF GOD

Never be without the remembrance of God, for His remembrance provides the bird of the spirit with strength, feathers, and wings. If your goal becomes actualized completely, that is *Light upon light* (XXIV 35). But in any case, through the remembrance of God your inward will be illuminated and you will achieve a degree of detachment from the world. For instance, look at the bird that wants to fly in heaven: Though it cannot reach heaven, moment by moment it soars farther from earth and higher than the other birds. Or consider a small box of musk whose opening is narrow: You put your hand into it, but you cannot bring out the musk; yet your hand becomes perfumed and your senses refreshed. So too is the remembrance of God: Even if you do not reach His Essence, yet His remembrance has numerous effects upon you. You actualize tremendous benefits by invoking Him. (F 175/183)

The cry of the ghoul is the cry of an acquaintance—an acquaintance that pulls you toward destruction.

It cries out, "Oh caravan! Come this way, here are the waymarks and the road!"

The ghoul mentions each by name—"Oh so-and-so!"—in order to make the traveler join those who have passed away.

Having gone forward, he sees wolves and lions, his life wasted, the road far away, the day late.

Tell us, then, what is that cry of the ghoul? "I want wealth, I want position, I want respect."

If you prevent these cries from rising up within yourself, then you can be initiated into the mysteries.

Invoke God and burn away the cry of the ghouls! Close your narcissuslike eye toward these vultures! (M II 748–754)

Drink the potion of His remembrance and be delivered from thoughts! If you were not to enter into all this strife, oh man pleasing to God, how would you lose? (D 8844)

A naked man jumped into the water to escape the stings of hornets.

The hornets circle around him; when he shows his head, they do not let him go.

The water is God's remembrance, and right now the hornets are the remembrance of this woman and that man.

Hold your breath in the water of remembrance and be patient, so that you may be freed from old thoughts and inward whisperings!

After that, you will gain totally the nature of that pure water from head to foot. (M IV 435–439)

In the outside world, wind sets a tree in motion. In the inside, remembrance rustles the leaves of the heart's tree. (D 9778)

Remembrance makes people desire the journey; it makes them into travelers. (D 33569)

What is sweeter than the remembrance of the Friend? Hey, do not sit idle like this! Invoke! (D 23208)

If you mention His Name in the depths of a well, He will make the well's depths the summit of paradise. (D 8565)

Separation from Him is a well, remembrance of Him a rope: At the bottom of the well a Joseph clings to the rope. (D 19325)

His Name is the Spirit of spirits, His invocation the ruby of the mines. His love is in the soul, He is both our refuge and our hope.

When I mention His Name, good fortune arrives; then the Name becomes the Named—without duality, without hesitation. (D 30700–01)

Where is the knowing, nimble Minstrel of Love—He who plays only for Love, accepting no one's request?

I have died hoping for Him but have not seen Him; I have entered the grave in my desire.

Oh dear friend, if you have seen Him, how good for you! Oh friend, indeed, how good for you!

But if He is hidden like Khiḍr,[18] alone upon the shores of the sea,

Then oh wind, take our salaam to Him! For my heart is in tumult over Him.

I know that burning salaams take lovers to their Beloved.

> Love makes the millwheel of the heavens spin, not water; Love makes the moon go forward, not feet.
>
> In remembrance, the millwheel of spirits begins to turn through the water of the eyes.
>
> Remembrance is the noose of union with the Beloved—be silent, for madness has begun to boil! (D *127*)

One of the lesser known dimensions of Sufi practice is the "meditation" (*fikr*) which precedes or accompanies remembrance/invocation. Certain Sufi texts give relatively explicit instruction concerning the practice of meditation, although other terms are more commonly employed, such as *muḥāsabah* ("accounting" one's inward states) or *murāqabah* ("attentive regard"). Rūmī makes passing reference to meditation as a spiritual discipline only under the more general term *fikr* and in relation to its concomitant *dhikr*. He also discusses, in relatively great detail, the transformation of meditation into its Object and of invocation into the Invoked. But this belongs more to the domain of "spiritual psychology" and will be discussed below, beginning with section III, D. In that context, for reasons which will be apparent, the word *fikr* can be translated better as "thought."

As to meditation as a spiritual discipline, the following two allusions to it are worth quoting. The first, a single line from the *Mathnawī*, summarizes all of Sufi discipline; the second, a short ghazal from the *Dīwān*, criticizes those disciples who lack the necessary fervor in their practice.

> The Sufis polish their breasts with invocation and meditation so that the heart's mirror may receive virgin images (from the Unseen world). (M I 3154)
>
> Brother! To be a lover you must have pain! Where is your pain? Sincerity and patience require a *man*. Where is the man?
>
> How much longer will your invocation be congealed and your meditation paralyzed? Where are passionate cries and a yellow face?
>
> I am not looking for the elixir or gold. Where is a receptive piece of copper? How can even a lukewarm disciple attain passionate love? What then if he's cold? (D *2206*)

3. MAN'S EFFORT AND GOD'S GRACE

To undertake the discipline of the path, man must exert himself to the utmost of his ability. But this must not lead him to overestimate the importance of his own self, since in the last analysis, it is precisely

his self from which he must escape. Hence, while Rūmī constantly urges the spiritual traveler to expend effort on the path, he often reminds him that all of his effort and everything he possesses derives from God's bounty and grace (*'ināyat*). Man's spiritual aspiration (*himmat*) must aim high, but he must never forget that God has given him his aspiration. Ultimately God's grace and attraction are all that matter. For, in the words of the Prophet, "A single one of God's attractions equals all the works of jinn and men."

> A single mote of grace's shadow is better than a thousand efforts of the obedient servant,
>
> For Satan will remove the bricks of obedience. Even if there are two hundred bricks, he will make a way for himself. (M VI 3869–70)
>
> Nonexistence is an Ocean and the world foam; it is Solomon, and the creatures are ants.[19]
>
> The Sea's boiling brings the foam into existence, Iran and Turan are but two of its flecks.[20]
>
> In this boiling, tell me, what is effort? Why do these patient men boast of their patience?
>
> The Sea has made the ugly beautiful, the waves have made the bitter sweet. (D 20010–13)
>
> Grace is one thing and effort another. The prophets did not achieve the station of prophethood through effort; they found that good fortune through grace. However, God's Wont requires that whoever achieves prophethood live out his life in striving and virtue. This is for the sake of the common people, in order that they might have confidence in the prophets and their words. For the common people are not able to see the inward—they only see the outward. But when they follow the outward, they find access to the inward through the outward's intermediary and blessing. (F 176/183–184)
>
> Indeed, the root is God's attraction; but, oh friend, exert yourself! Do not wait for that attraction!
>
> To abandon exertion is to show disdain: How should disdain be worthy of a spiritual warrior?
>
> Think neither of acceptance nor rejection, oh youth! But keep His commands and prohibitions constantly in view.
>
> Then suddenly the bird of attraction will fly down from its nest—when you see the morning, then you can put out the candle. (M VI 1477–80)
>
> Man imagines that he will be able to drive away his own reprehensible attributes by exertion and holy

war. After striving earnestly and expending his strength and means, he falls into despair. Then God says to him, "You imagined that you would accomplish this task through your own strength, activity, and effort. This is the Wont that I have established: expend everything you have in Our way. Then Our bounty will come to you. In this endless road, We command you to travel with your own feeble hands and feet. We know you cannot traverse this way with feet so feeble. Indeed, in a hundred thousand years you will not arrive at the first waystation. However, when you travel this road until your legs are exhausted and you fall down flat, until you have no more strength to move forward, then God's grace will take you in its arms." (F 78–79/91)

I was asleep and Thou awakened me so that I might sing of Thy eyebrow's curve.

Otherwise, if not for the attraction exerted by Thy Spirit, what has a creature of dust to do with Thy Love? (D 23586–87)

Our desire derives from Thy request—wherever a man travels the Way, he displays God's attraction.

Does dust leap up without wind? Does a ship set sail without the sea? (M V 4216–17)

Everyone sees the Unseen in proportion to the clarity of his heart, and that depends upon how much he has polished it.

Whoever has polished it more sees more—more Unseen forms become manifest to him.

If you say, "Purity is God's bounty," well, this success in polishing the heart also derives from His bestowal.

A man strives and prays to the extent of his spiritual aspiration: *A man shall have to his account only as he has labored* (LIII 39).

God alone bestows aspiration—no wretched beggar aspires to be king. (M IV 2909–13)

The tailor of Time has never sewn a shirt for any man without tearing it to pieces.

See a thousand simple fools in this world, paying Iblis skirts full of gold for pain.

These multicolored flowers that are sweetmeat to your eye—you eat of them and they give you yellow cheeks.

Oh you who have embraced a corpse saying, "My darling!" In the end embracing corpses will freeze body and soul.

> Become accustomed to God, for when your appointed time arrives, you will be parted unwillingly from these paintings of the devil.
>
> Stretch not your legs on this sweet carpet of earth, for it is a borrowed bed: Fear the time when they come to roll it up!
>
> Throw not the dice recklessly into this cup of Time! Beware of your opponent, for he is a master at backgammon.
>
> Behold not the dust of the body, gaze upon the mounted horseman of the spirit! Use your vision to search for the horseman in the midst of the dust!
>
> Faces like roses must come from a rosegarden: If there is no rosery, from whence the flowers?
>
> When you see the apple—the chin—know that there must be a tree. This apple serves as an exemplar—it is not to be eaten.
>
> Keep your aspiration high, for if you keep it low, the King's chamberlain will drive you away—"Begone!"
>
> Silence! No more words! Speak without words, like the rational faculty of the angels upon the lapis lazuli roof. (D *869*)

4. MEN AND WOMEN

Like other traditional metaphysical and cosmological teachings, Sufism divides the realities of existence into active and passive, male and female, yang and yin.[21] Thus the Creator is masculine and active in relation to creation, which is female and receptive. Within the created order, the Universal Intellect or "Supreme Pen" (*al-qalam al-'alā*) is active, writing the objects of its knowledge in the Universal Soul or "Guarded Tablet" (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*), thereby bringing the individual creatures into existence. Likewise heaven or the spiritual world is active in relation to earth, the material world.

> In the view of the intellect, heaven is the man and earth the woman: Whatever the one throws down the other nurtures. (M III 4404)

In the human microcosm, the Universal Intellect and Universal Soul are reflected in the intellect and the ego. However, because of man's unique position among creatures, the natural order of things is sometimes distorted or even reversed. In other words, the intellect should be active in relation to the passive ego. The intellect should discern truth from falsehood like a sword and then make decisions

upon the basis of this discernment; and the ego should animate and control the body in keeping with the intellect's directives. In the prophets and saints, who have returned to the human norm or "primordial nature" (*fiṭrat*), this is indeed the situation. But in most people, the ego has assumed an active role as the result of Adam's fall; hence it governs or at least colors the discernment of the intellect. Sensuality predominates and veils man from the intellect's light. If man were to rejoin his primordial perfection, his intellect would once again play a masculine role, and his ego would live in harmony with it as its feminine mate.

> If duality were to leave our heart and spirit for a moment, our intellect would be Adam, our ego Eve. (D 25842)

Since the two sexes reflect these two universal principles of activity and passivity, men have a certain innate affinity with the intellect, while women are more directly colored by the ego. Nevertheless, this does not mean that any given man is more dominated by the intellect than any given woman, since here it is primarily a question of form and not of meaning.

Rūmī's verses often follow the symbolism of this cosmological scheme, so that "men" are symbols of the saints and "women" are symbols of the unbelievers. In other words, he (or she) who is dominated by the intellect is a "man", while he (or she) who is dominated by the ego is a "woman." Hence "men" look at meanings, while "women" are caught up in forms.

The most common application of this symbolism is in the domain of practice and spiritual warfare. Thus "men" are spiritual warriors, while "women" are lacklustre worldlings. High aspiration on the spiritual path is the domain of men, while women sit at home and occupy themselves with mundane affairs. Spiritual combat is the realm of heroes like Rustam and 'Alī, while women prefer the apparent safety of the village and talk of this and that.

Although from this point of view femininity is negative because of its affinity with the ego and worldliness, from another point of view it is positive, since it reflects and displays God's Beauty, Gentleness, and Mercy. I shall allude to this second symbolism at the end of the present section and then refer to it in more detail below (part III, G).

> When a woman charges into battle, she will break no enemy ranks, but her plight will be lamentable.
>
> Though she carries a sword like a lion, her hand will be trembling.

Alas for him whose intellect is feminine and whose ugly ego is masculine and prepared!

Without question his intellect will be vanquished; he will be taken only toward loss.

Happy is he whose intellect is masculine and whose ugly ego is feminine and helpless!

His partial intellect is masculine and dominant; intelligence has negated the feminine ego. . . .

The animal attributes prevail in woman, because she tends toward colors and scents.

When the ass perceived the color and scent of the pasture, all arguments fled from its head. (M V 2459–64, 66–67)

This "man" and "woman," who are the intellect and the ego, are very necessary for the manifestation of good and evil.

Day and night in this abode of dust these two necessary beings are in war and altercation.

The woman always desires the necessities of the household—reputation, bread, food, and position.

Like a woman, the ego sometimes displays humility and sometimes seeks leadership to remedy its plight.

The Intellect, indeed, knows nothing of these thoughts; its mind contains naught but longing for God. (M I 2618–22)

Know that your ego is indeed a woman—it is worse than a woman, for the woman is a part of evil, your ego the whole. (M II 2272)

By the spirit of all Men! Whoever is not a lover of God is a woman in meaning—behold then what sort of women are women! (D 9584)

Woman is she whose way and goal are color and scent: She is the reality of the ego that commands to evil embodied in the physical constitution of humankind. (D 19431)

The superiority of men over women—oh worshiper of the present!—is that men see better the ends of things. (M IV 1620)

An effeminate man is not suited to fight against the ego; incense and musk are not suited for an ass's arse.

Since women never go out to fight the holy war, how should they engage in the Greater Holy War?

Except rarely, when a Rustam is hidden within a woman's body, as in the case of Mary.

In the same way, women are hidden in the bodies of those men who are feminine from faintness of heart.

In the next world, that womanliness will take on form for everyone who did not become mature in manliness. (M VI 1882–86)

. . . The king gave the girl in marriage to the general; he crushed his own anger and greed to dust.

Though he was feeble in the manliness of asses, he possessed the manliness of the prophets.

To abandon anger, sensuality, and greed is all manliness and a trait of the prophets.

Suppose he has none of the masculinity of asses in his veins. God will still call him "mighty king."

It is better for me to be dead and favored by God than living, but distant from Him and rejected.

Know that this is the kernel of manliness, that other the skin. The first takes to paradise, the second to hell. (M V 4024–29)

Manliness is this manliness, not beard and penis: Otherwise, the ass's implement would be the king of men. (M V 3711)

If you are not a highwayman on the road of religion, then worship not colors and scents like women. (M V 4082)

In the road are many highwaymen, but these companions are women—she who has prettily painted her feet is not worthy for this Way.

The battle drum has been sounded, the army of Love has arrived. Where is a courageous Rustam so that he may set to the task? (D 8826–27)

If you are a man, direct your heart steadfastly toward His awesome Face, for His Face is the kiblah of Men. (D 4311)

Look upon Love's face in order to gain the attribute of Men—sit not with the cold, for their breath will make you cold as well. (D 30415)

Join us like a man, for you are a lion—why do you let your heart flutter like a woman? (D 29052)

Who is Rustam in this world compared to the battle lines of God's lovers? Every day they ride their stallions joyfully into a sea of blood.

On every side two hundred headless corpses churn in an ocean of carnage, but the lovers dance and laugh like sugar in their splendor and glory, for *Verily unto Him we are returning* (II 156). (D 18700–01)

Marvellous battlefield, marvellous men, each one joyful in his own death! Make your own head the polo ball, then ride out on the field! (D 19402)

Who is this feminine ego that we should strike her with our swords? We will strike Rustam and receive blows from him! (D 16711)

We have learned the profession of manliness from God! We are champions of Love and companions of Muḥammad! (D 17499)

We are that shark for whom the ocean is but a single gulp! We are not men of sopped bread and lentils and the table. (D 17089)

Jump up, let us all dance, clapping our hands! For we have been delivered from women through our manliness! (D 35533)

A child cries for walnuts and raisins, a man of intellect sees such things as trifles.

In the view of the heart, the body is walnuts and raisins—but when will a child gain the knowledge of men?

Whoever is veiled is indeed a child—a *man* has escaped from doubt.

If you were a man because of beard and testicles—well, any goat has plenty of hair and a beard. (M V 3342–45)

Men rejoice at the passing of this world, but children exult in its endurance.

Since the blind bird has never tasted sweet water, it sees this briny pond as a spring of paradise. (M IV 2593–94)

In this world of dust how long will we fill our skirts with dirt and stones and potsherds, like children?

Let us leave the dust and fly to heaven, let us flee from childhood to the banquet of men! (D 14306–07)

One day an effeminate man called out, "Oh nasty shepherd! Will that goat bite me, I wonder? He looked at me from the midst of the flock."

The shepherd answered, "He will bite an effeminate man, he will even trample him under his hooves. But why should a *man* worry about him?" He said, "Well spoken!"

Where is your intellect, so that you may become rational? Where are your legs, so that you may travel—so that you may leave dry land for the ocean and become secure from earthquakes?

You will become the king of kings and enter the eternal realm; you will go higher than the spheres, far outside this garbage pit. (D 24218–21)

Oh you who call yourself a man! What kind of manliness is this, letting Iblis hump you like a pederast? (D 7528)

Just as the forms of men are relatively direct reflections of Severity and the activity of the Universal Intellect, so the forms of women manifest Gentleness and the serene receptivity and beauty of the soul at peace with God; in them, God's own Beauty reveals itself clearly. Both the *Mathnawī* and particularly the *Dīwān* are full of verses celebrating woman as the image of the divine Beloved. In the present context, a single passage can suffice as an allusion to this teaching.

She whose beautiful face makes man her slave—how will it be, indeed how, when she begins acting like his slave!

She whose haughtiness causes your heart to tremble—what will happen to you, indeed what, when she comes before you weeping!

She whose disdain fills your heart and soul with blood—what will it be like when she comes to you in need!

She who ensnares us through her tyranny and cruelty—what will be our plea when she comes before us pleading?

Made attractive to men is the love of desires—women. . . (III 14). God has made her attractive, so how can men escape from her?

Since He created Eve *so that Adam might find repose in her* (VII 189), how can Adam cut himself off from her?

Even if a man is Rustam and greater than Ḥamzah, still he is captive to his old woman's command.

The Prophet, to whose speech the whole world was enslaved, used to say, "Speak to me, oh 'Ā'ishah!"[22]

Water prevails over fire because fire dreads it; but when the fire is veiled, it brings the water to a boil.

When a pot comes between them, oh king, the fire naughts that water and changes it to air.

If, like water, you outwardly dominate over woman, inwardly you are dominated by her and seek her.

Mankind possesses such a characteristic, but the animals lack love because of their inferior status.

The Prophet said that women totally dominate men of intellect and Possessors of Hearts,

But ignorant men dominate women, for they are shackled by the ferocity of animals.

They have no kindness, gentleness, or love, since animality dominates their nature.

Love and kindness are human attributes, anger and sensuality belong to the animals.

She is the radiance of God, she is not your beloved. She is the Creator—you could say that she is not created. (M I 2421–37)

Part III

ATTAINMENT TO GOD

A.

Naughting the Self

1. SELFHOOD AND SELFLESSNESS

We have already seen numerous allusions to the primary goal of ascetic discipline and spiritual warfare: the elimination or transformation of the ego, which veils man from perceiving and actualizing his true selfhood. Rūmī refers to the "ego" by a number of other terms as well, including "(self-) existence" (*hastī, wujūd*), "self" (*khwud, khwīsh*), "selfhood" (*khwudī, khwīshī*), "I-ness" (*manī, anā'iyyat*), and "I-and-we-ness" (*mā-u-manī*). His discussions of the necessity of self-naughting permeate all his poetry and prose.

Think it not strange if the spirit veils the Beloved: Engage in ascetic discipline and leave aside the tumultuous ego! (D 2639)

Quickly remove self from the midst, so that you may grasp your Self in your embrace! (D 12280)

Make a journey from self to Self, oh friend, for by such a journey the earth becomes a mine of gold! (D 12117)

Purify yourself from the attributes of self, so that you may see your own pure essence! (M I 3460)

"I" and "we" are a stopper of mud and straw—remove the stopper, behold that you yourself are a vat of wine! (D 33271)

Self-existence brings terrible drunkenness; it removes intellect from the head and modesty from the heart.

> Lying in ambush, the intoxication of self-existence has waylaid a hundred thousand prior generations.
>
> Through it a servant like 'Azāzīl became Iblis, saying, "Why should Adam be lord over me?" (M V 1920–22)
>
> Everyone in the world flees from his own free will and existence to the side of drunkenness.
>
> Striving to be free from consciousness for an instant, people lay upon themselves the shame of wine and music.
>
> They all know that this existence is a snare, that volitional thought and memory are hell.
>
> They flee from selfhood into selflessness, intoxication, and busy-ness, oh well-guided man! (M VI 224–227)

Indeed, "selflessness" (*bī-khwudī, bī-khwīshī*) is the goal of the path, for it is nothing other than Selfhood.

> I have become senseless, I have fallen into selflessness—in absolute selflessness how joyful I am with Self! (D 17689)
>
> I will come to myself the instant I am obliterated and made selfless: I am complete only when outside of the five senses and four elements. (D 17741)
>
> We have repented of our own self—we will not leave *this* village. (D 24891)
>
> God calls, "Come out of your narrow abode; our ultimate rendezvous will be at the monument near the Sacred House."
>
> The translation of His words is this: "Come out of your selves quickly, or else every instant will be a shackle, every two paces snares and traps."
>
> Come out of ourselves? But to where? To selflessness! Selflessness is meaning, *meaning*! Self-consciousness is names, *names*! (D 16600–02)
>
> When we come into the midst, He goes to the side; when we go beside ourselves, He comes into the midst. (D 6109)
>
> All eyes and ears are shut, except for the eyes and ears of those who have escaped from themselves. (M III 837)
>
> Oh lovers, go out from the attributes of selfhood! Obliterate yourselves in the vision of the Living God's Beauty. (D 7850)

You have seen nothing but yourself, you twist and turn within yourself. Old man, why are you so shrivelled? Become selfless and be delivered! (D 27435)

Oh Thou whose glance is the mine of every elixir! Oh Thou whose Self is the lamp of every selfhood! (D 36328)

Every one who attracts good or evil draws it to himself—except Thou, oh rare Beloved! Thou drawest us to Us! (D 35825)

2. EXISTENCE AND NONEXISTENCE

To find his true Self, man must pass beyond his illusory self. Rūmī describes this journey employing several sets of terminology, each of which deserves our attention. Perhaps the widest and most fundamental set is that of existence and nonexistence, to which I have already referred in another context.

Because appearances are deceptive, man perceives the world as "existence" and himself as one existent among a myriad other existents. In truth, however, only God exists. If we place our existence next to his Existence, ours is seen to be totally derived from His, such that *we* have no existence. We have received a ray of His Being's light, and soon that ray will be drawn back to its Source. Hence what outwardly appears existent is really nonexistent, and what seems to be nonexistent is really Existence. The outwardly paradoxical conclusion is that if man desires existence, he must seek it in his own nonexistence.

Behold a world apparently nonexistent but existent in essence; and this other world, apparently existent, but without permanence! (M I 795)

God has made nonexistence appear existent and respectable; He has made Existence appear in the guise of nonexistence.

He has hidden the Sea and made the foam visible, He has concealed the Wind and shown you the dust. (M V 1026–27)

Since existence is to be found in nonexistence, while nothing exists in existence, a fire entered the spirit and consumed its existence. (D 807)

The whole world have taken the wrong way, for they fear nonexistence, while it is their refuge.

Where should we seek knowledge? In the abandonment of knowledge. Where should we seek peace? In abandoning peace.

> Where should we seek existence? In the abandonment of existence. Where should we seek apples? In abandoning our hands.
>
> Only Thou, oh Best of Helpers, canst transform the eye that sees nonexistent things into one that sees the Existent!
>
> The eye that has appeared from nonexistence sees the Essence of existence to be nonexistent. (M VI 822–826)

Islamic dogma holds that God "created the world from nonexistence." The Sufis point out that this cannot mean that before the creation of the world, the things were nonexistent in *every* respect. For God has knowledge of all things for all eternity, so before their creation the things "existed" within God's knowledge, although not within the world.

> Nonexistence is eagerly bubbling in the expectation of being given existence. The nonexistent things are like four people sitting in a row before a king. Each one desires and expects that the king will designate a certain post for him, and each one is ashamed before the others, since his expectation contradicts theirs. (F 206/215)

We have seen that if we take "existence" to mean "the world," then "nonexistence" is the state of things "with God." But if we realize that the world is really nonexistent, then the things with God are existent. From this point of view, God Himself is neither existence nor nonexistence, but beyond both, just as He is beyond all other dualities and pairs of opposites as well. Nevertheless, Rūmī may still refer to Him as "Existence," but in this context I prefer to translate the word as "Being" to indicate that it designates a state beyond the duality of nonexistence and existence.

> Existence is joyful and drunk with Thee, nonexistence's ear is in Thy hand—both are parasites on Thy Being, both have placed their will at Thy command. (D 10754)
>
> God's Presence is full of Mercy and Generosity; both existence and nonexistence are in love with Him. (M I 2445)
>
> The Throne of the King is outside of existence and nonexistence. It lies a hundred thousand years beyond affirmation and negation. (D 5049)

Nonexistence is God's workshop, wherein He produces the things and bestows existence upon them. If we desire existence, it is absurd for us to seek for it here among the already existent things. We must seek for it there with Him. To introduce these points, Rūmī shows that whatever anyone seeks, he is seeking a nonexistent thing, that is, nonexistent in relation to himself.

> If you want to be safe from harm, close your eyes to what strikes them first and look at the end:
> See that all nonexistent things are in fact existent! See that all existents are obviously abject!
> In any case, see that whoever possesses an intellect is seeking nonexistence day and night.
> In begging they seek a bounty that is not; in shops they seek a profit that is not;
> In fields they seek a crop that is not; in groves they seek a palm tree that is not;
> In schools they seek a knowledge that is not; in monasteries they seek a forbearance that is not.
> They have thrown existent things behind, they are seekers and slaves of nonexistent things,
> For the mine and treasure-house of God's making is naught but nonexistence coming into manifestation. (M VI 1360–67)
> The Absolute Being works in nonexistence—what but nonexistence is the workshop of the Maker of existence?
> Does anyone write upon a written page? Does anyone plant a sapling in a place already planted?
> No, he searches for a paper free of writing, he sows a seed in a place unsown.
> Be, oh brother, a place unsown, a white paper untouched by the pen! (M V 1960–63)
> Return from existence to nonexistence! You are seeking the Lord and you belong to Him!
> Nonexistence is a place of income, flee it not! This existence of more and less is a place of expenditure.
> God's workshop is nonexistence, so everything outside the workshop is worthless. (M II 688–690)
> The Worker is hidden in the workshop—go to the workshop, see Him face to face!
> Since the work has woven a veil over the Worker, you cannot see Him without it.
> The workshop is the Worker's dwelling place—those outside are heedless of Him.

So enter into the workshop, namely nonexistence, so that you may see both the Worker and the work together! (M II 759–762)

Felicity lies totally in nonexistence, but the fool seeks it from existence. (D 29146)

There is no place of rest but the Desert of Nonexistence, for existence has no faithfulness. (D 29440)

Fear the existence in which you are now! Your imagination is nothing, and you are nothing.

A nothing has fallen in love with a nothing, a nothing-at-all has waylaid a nothing-at-all.

When these images have departed, your misunderstanding will become clear to you. (M VI 1447–49)

Without doubt grief's fodder is this world of existence. Our place of rest is none but nonexistence, so go! (D 34832)

Though you possess two hundred existences, become nonexistent in His Being—fitting indeed to become nonexistent for that Being's sake! (D 7919)

The men of the Path looked for a remedy, but along with their own existence, none was found.

They lined up in the fire of Love, like iron, copper and granite.

In the manner of Men they were utterly drowned in the infinite Ocean. (D 24929–31)

What do I know if I exist or not? But this much I do know, oh Beloved: When I exist I am nonexistent, and when I am nonexistent I exist! (D 15017)

Oh minstrel, take us to nonexistence! For existence is a highwayman, since it is fearful, and none that is fearful is happy.

Oh existence, waylay the existents! For the spirit wishes that it had never come into existence, that it had never been born from nonexistence. . . .

Nonexistence is the ocean, we are the fish, and existence is a net—how can he who is caught in the net know the taste of the ocean? (D 7704–05, 07)

Proximity to God is not to go up or down—proximity to Him is to escape from the prison of existence.

How can nonexistence be up or down? Nonexistence is neither soon, nor late, nor far.

The workshop and treasure of God is in nonexistence: You are deceived by existence, so how should you know about nonexistence? (M III 4514–16)

3. ANNIHILATION AND SUBSISTENCE

Just as often as Rūmī speaks of the treasures that lie within nonexistence, he also employs the famous term of classical Sufism, "annihilation" (*fanā'*), which is often used in conjunction with its correlative term, "subsistence" (*baqā'*). Man's existence, or ego, or selfhood—call it what you will—must be annihilated so that he can attain to his true self, which is his existence and "subsistence" within God. All of man's character traits and habits, everything that pertains to his individual existence, must become completely naughted and "obliterated" (*maḥw*). Then God will give back to him his character traits and everything positive he ever possessed. But at this stage he will know consciously and actually—not just theoretically—and with a true and thorough spiritual realization, that everything he is derives absolutely from God. He is nothing but the ray of God's Attributes manifesting the Hidden Treasure.

No one will find his way to the Court of Magnificence until he is annihilated. (M VI 232)

You are your own shadow—become annihilated in the rays of the Sun! How long will you look at your shadow? Look also at His Light! (D 20395)

He alone is perfect in attribute who has become the prey of annihilation—a single hair will not find room in the circle of Uniqueness. (D 27470)

When you look for us, seek us next to the Beloved, for we have been annihilated from our skin but are manifest next to Him. (D 15707)

Come into the garden of annihilation and behold: paradise after paradise within the spirit of your own subsistence. (D 4047)

His Attributes have naughted my attributes; He gives me both purity and Attributes. (D 8484)

What is miserable copper when the elixir comes that it should not be annihilated from its copperness by the attribute of gold?

What is a miserable seed when spring comes that its seedness should not be annihilated for the sake of a tree?

What is a miserable piece of wood when it falls into the fire that it should not be tranformed into sparkling flames?

All intellects and sciences are stars, but Thou art the sun of the world who rendest their veils.

The world is snow and ice, and Thou art the burning summer—no trace of it remains, oh King, when Thy traces appear.

Who am I—tell me—miserable I, that I should subsist next to Thee? Thy glance annihilates me and a hundred like me. (D 32701–06)

Someone said, "There is no dervish in the world; and if there is a dervish, that dervish is nonexistent!"

He exists through the subsistence of his essence, but his attributes have been naughted in His Attributes.

Like the flame of a candle next to the sun—it is not, but it is when you consider:

The candle's essence exists, for if you place some cotton upon the flame, it will be consumed.

But the flame does not exist: It gives you no light—the sun has annihilated it. (M III 3669–73)

One morning a beloved said to her lover to test him, "Oh so-and-so,

I wonder, do you love me more, or yourself? Tell the truth, oh man of sorrows!"

He replied, "I have been so annihilated within thee that I am full of thee from head to foot.

Nothing is left of my own existence but the name. In my existence, oh sweet one, there is naught but thee.

I have been annihilated like vinegar in an ocean of honey."

In the same way, a stone transformed into a flawless ruby has become full of the attributes of the sun.

The description of that stone does not remain within it—full of the sun's description, front and back,

Should it love itself, then that will be love for the sun, oh youth!

Should it love the sun to the bottom of its soul, without doubt it will be in love with itself. (M V 2020–28)

Once again we have left our heart, intellect, and spirit behind—the Friend has come into the midst and we have disappeared.

We have turned back from annihilation and become woven into subsistence; we have found the Traceless and thrown away all traces.

Stirring up dust from the ocean and smoke from the nine spheres, we have discarded Time, the earth, and the heavens.

Beware, the drunkards have come! Clear the way!—no I said that wrong, for we have been delivered from the way and the travelers.

The spirit's fire has lifted its head from the body's earth; the heart began to shout, and like a shout, we rose up.

Let us speak less, for if we speak, few understand. Pour more wine, for we have entered the ranks of the self-deniers!

Existence is for women—the work of men is nonexistence. Thanks be to God, for we have risen as champions in nonexistence! (D *1601*)

4. AFFIRMATION AND NEGATION: THE SHAHĀDAH

Like so many other Sufis, Rūmī sees a clear expression of the principle underlying annihilation and subsistence in the fundamental declaration of faith in Islam, the *shahādah:* "(There is) no god but God." This testimony of faith is composed of two parts. The first part, "no god" (*lā ilāha*) is known as the "negation" (*nafy*), while the second part, "but God" (*illa-llāh*) is the "affirmation" (*ithbāt*). First the *shahādah* negates the world, then it affirms the existence of God. It signifies that nothing is real but the Real. Everything we see and imagine as real is a false reality, a false divinity; and beyond all these things and all vision and imagination is the true Reality, the One God. "There is no god but He: All things perish, except His Face" (Koran XXVIII 88).

When the *shahādah* is applied to the human individual, it signifies that "There is no self but the Self." Since man does not see things as they are, he imagines that his own self is real and that nothing lies beyond it. Even if he acknowledges the existence of God, he still lives and acts as if he himself were real and God were illusory. Therefore he is in need of the spiritual path, which involves the realization and actualization of annihilation and subsistence or negation and affirmation: Man's illusory self must be naughted so that his true Self may be affirmed and he may subsist within God.

On the one hand the *shahādah* signifies that "Nothing truly exists but God." All that appears as "other than He" (*ghayr*) is nonexistent in itself, whether it lies outside in the world or inside in our selves. But all forms are manifestations of meaning, all foam derives from the Sea. So on the other hand the *shahādah* also means that "Everything that exists is God." Since "there is no reality but the Reality," everything that may be called a reality—i.e., every single thing—is ultimately none other than the Reality, for there cannot be two completely independent realities, since that would mean that there are two Gods.

To see things as they are, man must combine the two points of view contained within the *shahādah*. He must negate the world and himself as separate existences and then affirm them both as manifestations of God's Being. However, a theoretical combination of these two points of view involves "imitation." It does not derive from a direct spiritual vision of the way things are. Man will not necessarily benefit from this merely theoretical knowledge unless he enters the Path with the aim of annihilating himself and attaining subsistence in God.

We imagined negation was affirmation, our eye saw nonexistent things.

The eye that appeared in slumber—how could it see other than fantasy and nonexistence? (M V 1032–33)

This world is negation, so seek in affirmation: Your form is nothing, so seek in your meaning! (M I 2241)

As much as the banner of the world dances, your eye sees a banner, but your spirit recognizes wind.

He who also knows the incapacity of wind considers everything except the Presence of *but God* as *no god.* (D 6457–58)

All things perish, except His Face: Since you are not in His Face, seek not to exist:

"*All things perish* no longer applies to him who is annihilated in Our Face,

For he is in *but God*, he has passed beyond *no god*; whoever is in *but* has not been annihilated." (M I 3052–54)

He said *No god*, then He said *but God*: *No* became *but God* and Oneness blossomed forth. (M VI 2266)

Were your body's existence to be naughted, then your soul would be exalted—after naughting is complete, you will be in *but God*'s Oneness. (D 25845)

Oh spirit, come and acknowledge! Oh body, go and deny! Oh *no god*, take me to the gallows, for you drag to *but God*! (D 35824)

Be joyful with Him, not with "others": He is spring, but others are like January.

Everything other than God is leading you astray, be it your throne, kingdom, and crown. (M III 507–508)

All the tasks of the world are different, but all are one.

Know that he who complains that there is no Beloved is drowned in the heart while seeking it.

I sought round the world for "others" and reached certainty: There are no others.

The buyers are all a single buyer, the bazaar has but one aisle.

He who has seen the nature of the garden—to him has it been revealed that there are no thorns.

When I filled the ice-vat with water, it melted—no trace of it remained.

The whole world is indivisible, the world's harp has but a single string. (D 34969–75)

5. DEATH AND REBIRTH

The most common image Rūmī employs in speaking of annihilation and naughting the self is that of death. He often quotes the Prophet's advice, "Die before you die!", and he likes to refer to the verse of the famous Sufi martyr Ḥallāj: "Kill me, my faithful friends! For in my slaughter is my life—my death is in my life and my life in my death."[1]

The mystery of "Die before death" is this: After dying come the spoils.

Other than dying no other skill avails with God, oh worker of deception! (M VI 3837–38)

Like a seed that dies and becomes a thousand ears, through God's bounty I became a hundred thousand when I died. (D 18026)

If He gives me death, let me die! That death is better than the breath of youth. (D 29277)

The ocean's water brings the corpse to the surface, but if a man is alive, how can he escape its depths?

When you have died to human attributes, the Ocean of Mysteries will bring you up to a place of elevation. (M I 2842–43)

This "I-and-we-ness" is a ladder that all men climb—in the end, they all must fall.

Whoever goes higher is a greater fool, for his bones will break the worse.

I speak of the derivative, but this is the principle: To deem oneself exalted is to claim copartnership with God.

As long as you have not died and become living through Him, you are a rebel seeking a realm for your copartnership.

When you have become living through Him, you are indeed He. That is utter Oneness, how could that be copartnership? (M IV 2763–67)

The saint has died to himself and become living through the Lord; hence God's mysteries are upon his lips.

When the body dies in self-discipline, that is life: The suffering of the body is the subsistence of the spirit. (M III 3364–65)

Like a laughing rose we fell from the stem, we gave up our spirit to the King who bestows the spirit.

Man is born again from the womb of the Workshop; this was the second time our mother, the world, gave birth to us.

You still do not see us, oh embryo! Only he who has been born anew sees where we have fallen. (D 35495–97)

Although the mother suffers the pain of childbirth, the embryo breaks out of its prison.

The woman weeps at the birth: "Where is the refuge?" The child laughs: "Deliverance has come!" (M III 3560–61)

Mother, I saw my birth from thee as death! I was terribly afraid of falling far from thee!

Then I was born and delivered from a narrow prison into a world of sweet air and beautiful colors. (M I 791–792)

You must be alive in Love, for a dead man can do nothing. Who is alive? He to whom Love gives birth. (D 8824)

In reality, He is the Creator of all effects, but the People of the Skin see nothing but secondary causes.

A kernel that has not left its shell behind has no escape from doctors and diseases.

When man is born for the second time, he plants his foot upon the head of all secondary causes. (M III 3574–76)

You died, and your vision turned to the world of the spirit. When you came alive again, then you knew how to live.

Whoever dies and returns—like the prophet Idris[2]—gives instruction to the angels and has knowledge of unseen things.

Come, tell me: By which road did you leave the world? And from that side—by which road did you come? For indeed, that road is hidden. (D 5235–37)

I died and came alive through Thee: Then I saw the world for the second time. (D 16262)

What place is this for "me"? I have died under the foot of His Love. No, I said it wrong: He who is alive through Him can never die. (D 24335)

Though you had been but one spirit, you become a hundred when everlasting Love destroys you. (D 36332)

I have died time and time again and then Thy breath has revived me. If I should die in Thee a hundred times more, again I will die in the same way.

I was scattered like dust and then became gathered up—how can I die in dispersion before Thy Gatheredness?

Like the child that dies at its mother's breast, I will die at the breast of the Mercy and Bounty of the All-Merciful.

What talk is this? How could the lover ever die? That would be truly absurd—to die in the water of life. (D 17166–69)

The water of life renews every spirit, but Thou art the Water of the water of life.

At every instant Thou hast given me a death and a resurrection—thus have I seen the controlling power of Thy Generosity. (M V 4222–23)

I have died a hundred times, oh Beloved, and this I tested: When Thy fragrance came, I beheld myself alive.

I surrendered my spirit a hundred times and fell from my feet; once again I was born when I heard Thy call. (D 17697–98)

Kill the cow of your ego as soon as you can, so that your hidden spirit may come to life and awareness! (M II 1446)

All of this dying is not the death of the form, for this body is nothing but the spirit's instrument.

Indeed, the blood of many an unripe man has been shed outwardly while his living ego fled to the other side.

The instrument was broken, but the brigand remained; the ego is alive, but the blood of its mount has been spilled.

His horse was killed before he traversed the Path: He remained nothing but unripe, ugly, and distraught.

Were everyone whose blood is spilled a martyr, a slain unbeliever would be a saint like Abū Sa'īd.[3]

Oh, there is many a trusty, martyred ego that has died in this world but walks about like the living.

The brigand spirit has died, but its sword remains in the hand of the warrior.

The sword is the same sword, but the man is not the same man—the form confuses you.

Once the ego has been transformed, the sword—the body—is held in the hand of the Bountiful Lord's craftsmanship. (M V 3821–29)

Since Thou takest the spirit, dying is like sugar—dying in Thee is sweeter by far than sweet life. . . .

Leave aside your body and become spirit! Dance to that world! Flee not, even if for now dying is tumult and commotion. . . .

Why should we flee the spirit? We find true spirit when we surrender the spirit. Why should we flee the mine? Dying is a mine of gold!

Once you have been delivered from this cage, your home will be the rosegarden. Once you have broken the shell, dying will be like the pearl.

When God calls you and pulls you to Himself, going is like paradise, dying like the pool of heaven. (D 21472, 75, 77–9)

What does it mean to be Love's familiar? Only to separate oneself from the heart's desire,

To become blood, to swallow down one's own blood, and to wait at fidelity's door with the dogs.

The lover sacrifices himself—for him death and removal are no different from staying.

On your way, oh Moslem! Be shielded by safety and strive at your piety,

For these martyrs have no patience without death—they are in love with their own annihilation.

Flee if you want from affliction and fate—their fear is to be without affliction.

Perform the fast on the recommended days and on 'Āshūrā—you cannot go to Karbalā.[4] (D *2102*)

6. POVERTY, SUFISM, AND DERVISHHOOD

In the context of Persian and Arabic Sufi writings the word "poverty" (*faqr, darwīshī*) is synonomous with Sufism, and a "poor man" (*faqīr, darwīsh*) is a Sufi. In other words, the dervish or fakir is he who has entered the spiritual path under the guidance of a shaykh. In Rūmī's works, these two words are usually synonomous with "saint," although

sometimes, especially in stories in the *Mathnawī*, he employs the term dervish with a view toward those who falsely claimed to be Sufis. His use of the word "Sufi" is similar, while the term "Kalander" (*qalandar*) usually denotes a Sufi who has achieved the highest stage of annihilation. Like the mythical Salamander, he passes in and out of fire without suffering harm: Having been annihilated by its flames, he has achieved subsistence.

Rūmī often employs the term "poverty" in a context showing that it is synonomous with "annihilation" and "nonexistence." The dervish is he who is "poor" because he has nothing of "his own." He is totally empty of selfhood. The true "poor man" is in truth the richest of all men, since, not existing himself, he subsists through the Self. This then is the significance of the Prophet's saying, "Poverty is my pride."

In a similar way Rūmī acknowledges the well-known derivation of the word "Sufi" from the root "wool" (*ṣūf*). Literally, "Sufi" signifies "a man who wears wool," referring to the early ascetic practices of some of the saints. But Rūmī appreciates the symbolism of deriving it from the root "purity" (*ṣafā'*), for the Sufi is he who has purified himself from his own selfhood.

> Of all the different kinds of knowledge, on the day of death only the science of poverty will supply provisions for the way. (M I 2834)
>
> "Whoever desires to sit with God, let him sit with the people of Sufism." All these sciences are games and a waste of one's life compared to the spiritual states of the fakirs. *The present world is naught but a game* (Koran XLVII 36). (F 145/153)
>
> In the way of poverty you attain all of your desires. Whatever you may wish, you will surely attain it in this way—whether it be the defeating of armies, vanquishing enemies, conquering kingdoms, subjugating peoples, excelling your contemporaries, refined speech, eloquence, or anything of this sort. When you choose the way of poverty, you will attain all these things. No one has ever entered this way and then complained—in contrast to other ways. Whoever has entered and striven upon those paths—one out of a hundred-thousand reaches his goal, and not such that his heart is joyful and attains repose. . . .
>
> But when you enter the world of poverty and practice it, God bestows upon you kingdoms and worlds that you never imagined. You become ashamed of what you longed for and desired at first. You say, "Oh! Given the existence of

something like this, how could I have sought after such trifles?" (F 145–46/154)

When anyone in the two worlds achieves a pure heart, he sees that the goal of the *Yea* in answer to *Am I not your Lord?* was poverty.

The world of dust is like a little hill, poverty a treasure hidden within it: The joy of children is to play and boast upon hills. (D 26345–46)

Poverty is not for the sake of hardship. No, it is there because nothing exists but God. (M II 3497)

Poverty has outstripped all and advanced stage by stage! Poverty unlocks the door—what a blessed key!

He who craves sensuality is polluted, he who craves the intellect is pure—but poverty has set up a tent on the other side of pollution and purity.

All the hearts of God's lovers have formed a circle around poverty: Poverty is the shaykh of shaykhs, all hearts are its disciples. (D 9326–28)

When annihilation adorns a man because of his poverty, he becomes shadowless, like Muḥammad.

Annihilation was the adornment of him who said, "Poverty is my pride." Like the flame of a candle, he had no shadow. . . .

When the candle is wholly annihilated in the fire, you will see no trace of it or its flames. (M V 672–673, 678)

The fakir's spirit circles around annihilation, like iron around a magnet.

For in his view, annihilation is existence: He has washed blindness and error from his eyes. (D 2948–49)

So behead your selfhood, oh warrior! Become selfless and annihilated, like a dervish!

When you have become selfless, you are secure in whatever you do: *Thou didst not throw when thou threwest, but God threw* (VIII 17). (M VI 1522–23)

Since nonexistence is the highest stage, the dervishes have outstripped all others. (M VI 1471)

Every spirit that flees poverty and nonexistence is misfortune fleeing good fortune and felicity.

Without obliteration no one has gained benefit from the tablet of Nonexistence. Bring about peace between me and obliteration, oh Loving God! . . .

For a lifetime you have made trial of your own existence. Once you must try out nonexistence!

The splendor and fanfare of poverty and annihilation is no empty boast: Wherever there is smoke, there must be fire. (D 9018–19, 25–26)

The physician, poverty, sought and found my heart's ear. It whispered, "Spread the good news: You have been delivered from the suffering of existence." (D 32852)

The "phoenix,"[5] the "alchemy," the "station of the Kalander"—these are the Kalander's attributes, but he is free of them all.

You say, "I am a Kalander," but the heart cannot accept that: A Kalander is not created. (D 31948–49)

In short, human nature does not encompass the Kalander—he is totally vision, vision directed toward the silence of the heart's speech! (D 14133)

Everyone suffers heartache over secondary causes, but the lovers have passed beyond causes, like Kalanders. (D 6990)

Oh heart, the path of those who diminish themselves is subsistence within subsistence! Oh heart, without doubt the Kalander is certitude within certitude! (D 14148)

Men shake their sleeves in absolute annihilation, emptying their skirts of falsehood and truth.

How could a nondelimited man pollute his hands with the spirit? After all, oh friend, from what did the Kalander depart?

A traveler presented his disengaged spirit to a Kalander. The Kalander whispered in his ear, "You should be on the other side—

As long as you burn on this side in the flames of your love, you are still delimited, for you are in tumult." (D 29484–87)

The Salamander's mystery will not let fire burn it—the Kalander has a spirit rarer than that: Tell about it! (D 23004)

Oh gnostic cognizant of the mystery of the Known, and oh unalloyed man who has assumed the traits of the Kalander!

The ocean's water comes up to your ankles—in the midst of fire you possess the Salamander's nature! (D 31667–68)

Those who have been decapitated through poverty are a hundred times more annihilated than those who have simply died.

The dead man has been annihilated in one respect through loss of life, but the Sufis have been annihilated in a hundred respects.

Death is a single killing, but this is three hundred thousand, each of which receives a bloodprice beyond reckoning. (M VI 1537–39)

Have you heard how Khiḍr broke the planks of the ship to save it from the hands of the tyrant? (Koran XVIII 72, 80)

The Khiḍr of your time is Love: Broken, the Sufi is pure and sits at the bottom like dregs. (D 4315–16)

The Sufi is he who seeks purity, not he who wears a garment of wool, patches it, and commits sodomy.

In the eyes of these despicable people, "Sufism" is patching and sodomy, nothing else. (M V 363–364)

In the convent of the universe, in the seminary of this world, I am a Sufi of pure heart, not a Sufi of wool. (D 34965)

Poverty, which you find shameful, will yield pride in the next world. (D 10319)

Thy bestowal and bounty have made the fakir's poverty his pride—death no longer has any hold upon him. (D 26301)

Patience waited because it saw Thy sweet gratitude, poverty has pride because Thou givest it riches. (D 31989)

The dervishes are kings, all of them selfless in intoxication. Though made of dust, they are shahs and sultans. (D 6078)

How are they "dervishes"? For each is the treasury of the realm, kings standing before him shamefaced.

With Thee they are dervishes, but with others sultans—for Thou hast bestowed upon them crown and kingdom.

The moon is a dervish before the sun, but it rides like a king among the stars. (D 28559–61)

In the heart and soul of the Kalander, Thou art both wound and dressing—oh Absolute Light, Thou art the wound and dressing of poverty! (D 29706)

Welcome oh Subsistent Spirit, Triumphant King, Spirit-Bestower of every conjunction, Sun of every realm!

This world and that are both slaves to Thy Command—if Thou desirest them not, destroy them—else let them be.

Shine a ray of poverty's sun upon existence! Free us all from hope of paradise and fear of the Fire!

Deliver the proud men of poverty from the shame of their own spirits! Destroy all these paintings and pictures for the sake of the Painter—

That Champion who has poured out the blood of a hundred thousand! With the fire of eternal good fortune, burn their spirits to cinders!

No one will understand these mysteries of Thy Gentleness but he who comes out from the spiritual work without existence, obliterated by poverty. (D 11234–39)

7. "I AM GOD"

Only when man's ego is truly obliterated and annihilated may he properly say "I." But then *he* is not saying it, for his attributes have been replaced by God's Attributes. At this stage of subsistence in God man truly "carries the Trust" and becomes God's vicegerent on earth, the full and conscious manifestation of His Being. But when a man says "I" before reaching this station, he is affirming the existence of his own self. Even if he is a believer he is saying, "I exist and God exists." But this contradicts the *shahādah*, which states that "There is no reality but the Real." Since "I-ness" is a reality, man's I-ness is unreal. In truth "There is no I but I." But here it is no longer man's "I," it is God's "I." As long as man's ego and selfhood subsists, he is an unbeliever and an idolater, for he continues to affirm—in practice if not in theory— that there are two real existents, two "I's."

With God, two I's cannot find room. You say "I" and He says "I." Either you die before Him, or let Him die before you; then duality will not remain. But it is impossible for Him to die, either subjectively or objectively, since He is *the Living God, the Undying* (XXV 58). He possesses such Gentleness that were it possible, He would die for you so that duality might vanish. But since it is impossible for Him to die, you die, so that He may manifest Himself to you and duality may vanish. (F 24–25/36)

What is our "we" when Thou sayest "I"? What is our copper before the elixir?

Before the sun can a handful of snow do anything but become annihilated in radiance and light? (D 35349–50)

When Ḥallāj's love for God reached its utmost limit, he became his own enemy and naughted himself. He said, "I am God," that is, "I have been annihilated; God

remains, nothing else." This is extreme humility and the utmost limit of servanthood. It means, "He alone *is*." To make a false claim and to be proud is to say, "Thou art God and I am the servant." For in this way you are affirming your own existence, and duality is the necessary result. If you say, "He is God," that too is duality, for there cannot be a "He" without an "I." Hence God said, "I am God." Other than He, nothing else existed. Ḥallāj had been annihilated, so those were the words of God. (F 193/202)

When a man is possessed by a jinni, he loses the attributes of humanity.

Whatever he says, the jinni has pronounced the words—he who is from that side has spoken on this side.

Since the jinni possesses this power and nature, what about the Creator of the jinni?

Man's identity has gone, and the jinni has become him: Without inspiration, a Turk begins to speak Arabic.

When he comes to himself, he does not know a single word. Since this essence and attribute are possessed by the jinni,

How could the Lord of the jinn and men be less than a jinni? (M IV 2112–17)

When Ḥallāj said, "I am God" and persevered, he throttled all the blind.

When a man's "I" has been naughted from existence, what then remains? Think, oh denier!

If you have an eye, open it and look! After *no god*, why, what else remains? (M VI 2095–97)

The Baptism of God (II 138) is the dying vat of "He": Within it all piebald things are made one color.

When someone falls into the vat and you say, "Out!", he will say in his joy, "I am the vat, do not blame me!"

That "I am the vat" is the same as "I am God." He has the color of fire, though he is iron.

The color of iron is obliterated by the color of the fire: The iron boasts of fire, yet remains silent.

When red like the gold of the mine, it exults without tongue: "I am the fire."

It has gained honor through the color and nature of the fire. It says, "I am the fire, I am the fire.

I am the fire. If you are doubtful or suspicious, test me! Touch me with your hand! . . ."

When man receives light from God, he becomes the object of the angels' prostration, since he was chosen. . . .

What fire? What iron? Shut your lips! Do not mock the comparisons of those who compare things to God! (M II 1345–51, 53, 55)

If I be a king but without Thee, then how false are this "I" and "we"! But if I am dust and with Thee, how comely is my I-hood! (D 33594)

Pharoah said, "I am God," and became despicable.[6] Ḥallāj said, "I am God," and was saved.

That "I" brought with it God's curse, but this "I" brought His Mercy, oh friend! (M V 2035–36)

To say "I" at the wrong time is a curse, but to say it at the right time is a mercy.

Without doubt Ḥallāj's "I" was a mercy, but that of Pharoah became a curse. Note this!

Hence a rooster that crows at the wrong time must be beheaded as a warning.

What is "beheading"? To kill the ego in the holy war and to renounce it. . . .

Nothing kills the ego but the shadow of the shaykh: Cling tightly to the skirt of that ego-killer! (M II 2522–25, 28)

Hark, oh Pharoah, let go of Egypt! Within the Egypt of the spirit lie a hundred Egypts! . . .

Light appears as fire and fire as light—were this not so, why is this world the "Abode of Delusion"?

Do not hurry, first become nonexistent! When you have set in the west, then your light will rise from the east.

The heart was dumbfounded by the I-hood of Eternity—its own I-hood became insipid and disgraced.

The spirit became joyful through the I-less I; it fled from the I of the world.

When it escaped from the I, then it became I. Praise be to this I without affliction! . . .

When will this I ever be revealed by way of thought? This I will only be unveiled after annihilation. (M V 4127, 36–40, 46)

Come sit in my eyes, oh Thou who art more I than I! Let me show the moon that Thou hast even more radiance! (D 29715)

B.

Love

It can easily be shown that Love (*'ishq*)[7] is the central theme of all Rūmī's works. If we were to begin studying him through the *Dīwān*, we would soon see that most of its poems deal explicitly with this subject. And as soon as one understands what Rūmī means by Love, one can see that even the *Mathnawī* and *Fīhi mā Fīhi*, where the word "Love" is not mentioned nearly as often, deal largely with Love's branches and ramifications.

In Rūmī's view, Love totally dominates and determines the Sufi's inward and "psychological" states. But because Love pertains to the experiential dimensions of Sufism, not the theoretical, it must be experienced to be understood. It cannot be explained in words, any more than the true nature of one's attachment to a beloved of this world can be set down on paper. This is all the more so since the Sufi's Beloved transcends not only this world, but the next world as well and everything we can possibly conceive or imagine. Rūmī often remarks on the impossibility of explaining Love, although in other verses he takes the complementary point of view: One can discuss it forever and never exhaust it. In any case, the result is the same: Love cannot truly be expressed in words. It is fundamentally an experience situated beyond the narrow confines of articulated thought—but an experience more real than the universe and all it contains.

> No matter what I say to explain and elucidate Love, shame overcomes me when I come to Love itself. (M I 112)

Love cannot be contained within our speaking or listening; Love is an ocean whose depths cannot be plumbed.

Would you try to count the drops of the sea? Before that Ocean, the seven seas are nothing. (M V 2731–32)

Love cannot be found in erudition and science, books and pages. Whatever is discussed by people—that is not the way of lovers. (D 4182)

Whatever you have said or heard is the shell: The kernel of Love is a mystery that cannot be divulged. (D 2988)

Enough! How long will you cling to these words of the tongue? Love has many expositions beyond speech. (D 4355)

Silence! Silence! For the allusions of Love are reversed: The meanings become hidden from much speaking. (D 12073)

Someone asked, "What is Love?" I replied, "Ask not about these meanings.

When you become like me, then you will know. When He calls you, you will recite its tale." (D 29050–51)

Oh you who have listened to talk of Love, behold Love! What are words in the ears compared to vision in the eyes? (D 24681)

Love, then, has to be experienced to be understood. But we can still glean a great deal about this ineffable reality from Rūmī's words, so long as we remember that Love exists to be realized, not discussed. If Rūmī discusses it, he does so only to stir up the desire for Love in the heart of the listener:

What is Love? Perfect thirst. So let me explain the Water of Life. (D 17361)

1. GOD AS LOVE AND BEYOND LOVE

God is the source of all love, just as He is the source of all other things. But to what extent may it properly be said that "God is Love"? The fact that Love is an Attribute of God is confirmed implicitly by numerous Koranic verses in which God is said to "love" something. The Sufis usually quote the following verse, since it shows clearly the hierarchical relationship between God's Love for man and man's love for God, the latter of which derives its existence from the former: "God will bring a people whom He loves and who love Him, humble towards the believers, disdainful towards the unbelievers, men who

struggle in the path of God, not fearing the reproach of any reproacher" (V 54).

As to whether or not we may say that "God is Love," the answer is the same as with any other divine Attribute: yes and no. God is certainly Love, but this Attribute does not exhaust His Reality. In the same way He is Mercy, Knowledge, Life, Power, and Will. He possesses all these qualities; His Being is the same as their Being; but we may not say that God is Mercy and nothing else, or that He is Knowledge and nothing else. As the "Coincidence of Opposites," He possesses all His Attributes absolutely, yet in His Essence He is beyond them all. From one point of view He is Love, but from another point of view He is beyond Love. Both points of view are seen in Rūmī's verses and prose.

Love is affection beyond bounds. Hence it is said that Love is truly God's Attribute, while it is the attribute of His servants only in a derivative sense. *He loves them* is everything. What then is *they love Him*? (M II intro.)

Fear is not even a hair before Love; in the Religion of Love, all things are sacrificed.

Love is an Attribute of God, but fear is an attribute of the servant afflicted by lust and gluttony.

Since you have read in the Koran *they love Him* placed in a single verse with *He loves them*,

Know that Love and Affection are Attributes of God. But fear is not God's Attribute, dear friend!

What relationship exists between God's Attribute and that of a handful of dust? Or between the attribute of a temporal being and that of the All-Holy?

If I should continue my explanation of Love, a hundred resurrections would pass before I could complete it,

Since the date of the resurrection has a limit—but where are limits when it is a question of God's Attributes? (M V 2184–90)

Know that Love's branches are in Eternity-without-beginning, its roots in Eternity-without-end—this tree is not supported by God's Throne, the earth, or a trunk. (D 4183)

When I leave sleeping and eating behind, I will become like everlasting Love: Living, Self-subsistent. (D 16036)

Others call Thee Love, but I call Thee the Sultan of Love—oh Thou who art beyond the concept of this or that, do not go without me! (D 23303)

No one has ever walked two or three paces toward the garden of Love without a hundred salaams from the Gardener.

Beyond Love are thousands upon thousands of courtyards, but their might and majesty prevent them from entering the mind. (D 10109–10)

The Caravan of the Unseen enters the visible world, but it remains hidden from all these ugly people.

How should lovely women come to ugly men? The nightingale always comes to the rosebush.

The jasmine grows next to the narcissus, the rose comes to the sweet-mouthed bud.

All of these are symbols—I mean that the other world keeps coming into this world.

Like cream hidden in the soul of milk, No-place keeps coming into place.

Like intellect concealed in blood and skin, the Traceless keeps entering into traces.

And from beyond the intellect, beautiful Love comes dragging its skirts, a cup of wine in its hand.

And from beyond Love, that indescribable One who can only be called "That" keeps coming. (D 30789–96)

2. THE WORLD AS CREATED BY LOVE

Love is desire and need. Although in His Essence God is beyond all need, yet at the level of His Attributes He said, "I desired (or "loved") to be known, so I created the world."[8] Likewise, it was His Love for the Prophet which made Him say, "But for thee, I would not have created the celestial spheres." Hence God's Love for manifesting the Hidden Treasure through the prophets and saints was the motivating force in His creation of the universe. As a result, Love courses throughout the world's arteries. All movement and activity result from that original Love; the world's forms are but the reflections of its unique reality.

The creatures are set in motion by Love, Love by Eternity-without-beginning; the wind dances because of the spheres, the trees because of the wind. (D 5001)

God said to Love, "If not for thy beauty, how should I pay attention to the mirror of existence?" (D 26108)

The world is like a mirror displaying Love's perfection. Oh friends! Who has ever seen a part greater than its whole? (D 25248)

Love is the kernel, the world the shell; Love is the sweetmeat, the world the cauldron. (D 22225)

Like Adam and Eve, Love gives birth to a thousand forms; the world is full of its paintings, but is has no form. (D 5057)

Oh Love who hast a thousand names and a cup of sweet wine! Oh Thou who bestowest a thousand skills!

Oh formless One with a thousand forms! Oh Form-giver to the Turk, Greek, and Ethiopian! (D 14022–23)

Love splits the spheres with a hundred splittings, it shakes the earth mightily.

Pure Love was paired with Muḥammad—for its sake God said to him, "But for thee . . .".

Since he was the unique goal of Love, God singled him out from the other prophets:

"But for pure Love, how should I have given existence to the celestial spheres?

I erected the heavenly wheel so that you might understand Love's exaltation." (M V 2736–40)

The spheres turn for the sake of the lovers, the Wheel revolves for the sake of Love,

Not for the baker or ironsmith, nor for the carpenter or druggist.

The heavens turn round about Love: Rise, so that we also may turn!

Behold "But for thee, I would not have created . . .". What did He say? "Muḥammad the chosen is Love's mine."

For a time let us revolve around Love. How long will we circle this carrion? (D 12293–97)

3. THE WORLD AS MAINTAINED BY LOVE

All things participate in God's Love, the motivating force of creation, so all things are lovers. In other words, each existent is infused with need and desire for other existents and is constantly striving to gain union with them. These individual loves are the immediate source of all movement and activity.

God's wisdom in His destiny and decree has made us lovers of one another.

That foreordainment has paired all parts of the world and set them in love with their mates.

Each part of the world desires its mate, just like amber and straw.

Heaven says to the earth, "Hallo! Thou drawest me like iron to a magnet!" . . .

The female desires the male so that they may perfect each other's work.

God placed desire within man and woman so that the world might find subsistence through their union.

He places desire in each part for another part and their union gives birth to offspring. (M III 4400–03, 14–16)

A hundred thousand snakes and ants, a hundred thousand eaters of their daily bread—each seeks a share, each has its own lament. (D 20467)

Oh, a different kind of fruit shakes every branch, a different cup of wine intoxicates each of us and makes us its fool!

Behind the veil two hundred ladies have scratched their cheeks and beaten their heads, each widowed from a different mate.

A fisherman's hook is stuck in every fish's mouth—the one shouts, "Oh dear!", the other, "How lovely!"

Gabriel dances in love for God's Beauty, the afreet in love for a she-devil. (D 24643–46)

Everyone was made for a particular task; desire for it was placed in his heart.

How should hand and foot move without desire? How should sticks and leaves move without water and wind? (M III 1618–19)

The King spoke hidden words into everyone's ear—to the spirit of each, He gave a different message.

War among the creatures, hatred among the living—He sets them there each instant: That is a fine friend!

He spoke sweet and flowing words to the rose and made it laugh, He made a subtle point to the cloud and wet its eyes.

He says to the rose, "Celebration is best!" He says to the cloud, "Weeping is best!" No one accepts the advice of another.

He says to the branch, "Dance!", to the leaves, "Clap!", to the heavens, "Revolve about the earth's mansions!" (D 26047–51)

That world is like an ocean, and this world is foam. God the Almighty desired to keep the foam in good order, so He made certain people turn their backs to the ocean in order to maintain the foam. . . . A tent has been pitched for the king, and certain people have been made busy keeping the tent in good order. One of them says, "If I did not make the pegs, where could they tie the ropes?" . . . God gave each of them a satisfaction and happiness in his task, so much so, that were he to live a hundred thousand years and do nothing

else, every day his love for it would increase. (F 92–93/104)

The trees were saying, "What a shame! Under the earth we possess such skill and elegance and beauty! We have received such favors from God; and other roots have no knowledge of these things. Oh would that there were a day of bazaar, so that we could display our beauty! So that our excellence and the ugliness of others could be brought to light!"

An answer came to them from the Unseen World: "Oh prisoners of water and clay, occupy yourselves with your tasks and acquire skills! Be not broken-hearted! Fear not that your skills will remain hidden! For We have placed these pearls and fruits in your treasuries, and you yourself had no knowledge of them. They were concealed in Our Unseen Knowledge. Before entering into existence the skills and beauties that you see today in yourselves were pearls in the Unseen Ocean, hurrying to enter the treasuries of the inhabitants of dry land. We have placed a special characteristic in every possessor of a skill, in every craftsman and master of a task, whether goldsmith, jeweler, magician, alchemist; and in every tradesman, lawyer, and scholar—so that he will always be bubbling over and displaying his own skill. We have placed this bubbling and this desire, and they have become unsettled, like girls who have just reached puberty. In their houses the girls adorn their clothing and their beauty and gaze at mirrors. They want to tear aside the veil and show their loveliness to the elect and the vulgar. From the bottom of their souls they say,

> 'Old women's words cannot hold us back, the heart-distressing world cannot detain us.
>
> She whose long tresses extend like a chain—not even a chain can keep her in the house!'
>
> . . .

"But what place is man's farm plot—within which the crop is flesh and skin and bones—for these aspirations and desires? These desires are My Holy Attributes. . . . 'I was a Hidden Treasure, so I wanted to be known.'" (MS 28)

4. LOVE AND BEAUTY: TRUE AND DERIVATIVE

Man's love can be divided into two kinds: "true love" (*'ishq-i ḥaqīqī*), or love for God; and "derivative love" (*'ishq-i majāzī*), or love for

anything else. But on closer examination, one sees that all love is in fact love for God, since whatever exists is His reflection or shadow. The difference then between the two kinds of love is that some people know that only God truly exists and direct their love only toward Him; while others believe in the independent existence of various objects of desire and so turn their love toward them.

But since love for other than God derives from love for Him, it ultimately leads to Him. One by one man's objects of desire will show their unfaithfulness, and man will turn his love elsewhere. However, many will not find the true Beloved until after death, when it will be too late to try to close the gap of separation. The Sufi has already discovered that there is only one Beloved; he sees all derivative love as cold and unreal.

In the present context Rūmī explains the nature of beauty clearly and succinctly: It is a drop of spray from the infinite Ocean, or a ray of light shining upon a wall. All beauty derives from the other world, so here it is borrowed and ephemeral. True Beauty pertains only to God.

> In the eyes of the elect, Love is a tremendous eternal light, even though the vulgar see it as but form and sensuality. (D 18197)

> All the hopes, desires, loves, and affections that people have for different things—fathers, mothers, friends, heavens, the earth, gardens, palaces, sciences, works, food, drink—the saint knows that these are desires for God and all those things are veils. When men leave this world and see the King without these veils, then they will know that all were veils and coverings, that the object of their desire was in reality that One Thing. All their difficulties will be solved, all the questions and perplexities they had in their breasts will be answered. They will see all things face to face. (F 35/46)

> All things in the world—wealth, women, clothing—are desired for the sake of other things, not for their own sake. Do you not see that if you had a hundred thousand dirhams and were hungry, but you could not find food, you would not be able to eat those dirhams? Women are for children and for satisfying passion. Clothing is for warding off cold. So it is with all things, which are linked together, one after the other, all the way to God. It is He who is desired for His own sake, not for something else. He is better than all things, nobler than all, pleasanter than all. So how should He be desired for the sake of what is less than He? So *He is the*

Goal (LIII 42). When He is attained, the Universal Object of Desire has been attained. There is no passing on. (F 101/112–113)

Anyone madly in love with a dead thing has hope for something that lives.

The carpenter has turned toward wood in hope of serving a moon-faced beloved.

Strive in the hope of a Living One who does not become inanimate after a day or two!

Choose not a mean companion out of meanness, for intimacy with him is but a borrowed thing.

If your intimates other than God possess faithfulness, what happened to your father and mother?

If you can depend on someone other than God, where are your nursemaid and tutor?

Your intimacy with milk and breasts has gone, your dread of grammar school has gone.

That was a ray upon the wall of their existence: The radiance has returned to the Sun.

When that ray falls upon something, you become its lover, oh courageous man!

Whatever you love in existence has received a gold plating from God's Attributes.

When the gold returns to its origin and the copper remains, your nature becomes disgusted and divorces it.

Pull yourself back from those things gold-plated with His Attributes, continue not in your ignorance to call the counterfeit coin "beautiful."

That beauty of the counterfeit coin is a borrowed thing; beneath its comeliness lies the substance of uncomeliness.

Gold leaves the surface of the counterfeit coin for the Mine—you also, go to that Mine where it is going!

Light goes from the wall to the Sun—go to the Sun that always moves in proportion!

From now on take water from heaven, for you have seen no faithfulness from the drainpipe! (M III 545–560)

Love is an Attribute of God, who has no needs; to be in love with other than Him is derivative.

For its beauty is gold-plated: Outwardly it is light, inwardly smoke.

When the light goes and the smoke appears, then derivative love turns cold.

That beauty returns to its Source; a body remains, putrid, disgraced, and ugly.

The moonlight returns to the moon, its reflection leaves the black wall.

Then water and clay remain without that ornament: Without the moon, the wall becomes like a devil.

When gold leaves the face of counterfeit coin and returns to dwell in its own mine,

The disgraced copper remains like smoke—but its lover is even more black-faced. (M VI 971–978)

All this beauty and attractiveness in the face of the black earth has shone forth from the Moon of the Unseen: It is a ray of Perfection's Light. (D 14289)

Beauty in man is like gilding—otherwise, why did your lovely mistress become an old ass?

She was like an angel but became a devil, for her comeliness was a borrowed thing. (M II 712–713)

"The moon-faced beauties of the world have stolen beauty from Our Beauty: They have stolen a mote of My Beauty and Goodness.

In the end these moon-faced darlings will be straw-faced. Such is the state of thieves in My authority's presence.

Day has come, oh dust-creatures! Return what you have stolen! Oh sweet beloved, how should dust possess wealth or beauty?"

When night veils the sun, the planets begin to boast. Venus says, "Know that all belongs to me!" The moon retorts, "It is mine!"

Jupiter brings pure gold out of his sack; Mars threatens Saturn, "Watch out for my sharp dagger!"

Mercury sits at the front: "I am the chief of chiefs. The heavens are my property and the constellations my pillars."

At daybreak the Sun brings its regiments from the east. It says, "Oh thieves! Where have you gone? Now all belongs to me!

Venus' liver has been torn and the moon's neck broken; my shining face has turned Mercury dry and cold.

Our light has destroyed the work of Mars and Saturn; destitute, Jupiter cries out, 'Gone my sack of gold!'" (D 20545–53)

The universe displays the beauty of Thy Comeliness! The goal is Thy Beauty—all else is pretext. (D 31554)

Through the cup of the noble, Thou hast poured a drop from that hidden goblet upon this earth of dust.

Since tresses and cheeks show a sign of that drop, kings keep licking the ground.

Delicate earth has received a drop of Beauty, so you kiss it night and day with a hundred hearts.

Though mixed with earth, a single drop can drive you mad—what then will that wine do to you when pure? (M V 372–375)

In reality, that which attracts is a single thing, but it appears multiple. Do you not see how a man desires a hundred different things? He says, "I want *tutmāj* stew, I want *burāk*, I want halva, I want fried meat, I want fruit, I want dates." He enumerates and names all these things, but the root is one thing: hunger. Do you not see that after he is surfeited with a single thing he says, "None of these is necessary"? Hence it is clear that there were not ten or a hundred things, there was only one. (F 7/19)

Your beloved is not form, whether your love is from this world or that.

Why do you leave the form that you love when its spirit goes?

Its form is still there—why have you had your fill? Oh lover, look carefully! Who is your beloved? (M II 703–705)

When you go to a friend's form, you go for the sake of your companionship with him.

Hence in meaning you have gone to the formless, even if you are unaware of your goal.

So in reality God is worshiped by all things, for they all travel their paths in search of joy.

But some have turned their faces toward the tail. The Head is the root, but they have lost it. (M VI 3753–56)

May God the Exalted make that good-news about which you wrote the prelude to the Greatest Good-News, for all the good-news of this world flashes forth as the ray of that sweet Good-News. Were it not for the radiance and splendor of that Greatest Good-News, no good-news in the world would have any savor—it would all taste like dirt and straw. The ray of His Bestowal gave wheat to straw, stars to smoke (cf. Koran XLI 11–12), and the beauty of mankind to dust; likewise it gave the good-news that partial spirits will be united with their hopes and desires. Thus men of intellect are not content with just this; they seek the Infinite Root and Source and Mine of these desires and aims. Then they may

attain to those Roots through these branches, and actualize that Reality through this derivative. (MK 8: 15/52)

May the amir of amirs attain to the felicity and good-fortune that lie beyond the felicity and good-fortune understood by men and worldlings! Concerning it the Prophet said, "No eye has seen it, no ear has heard it, no human being has perceived it in his heart. Once you see it, you will see beatitude and a great dominion." For the felicity of this world is but the reflection and effects of that felicity: *The present life is naught but a game and a diversion* (XLVII 36). Every game is the reflection of a serious affair and has been stolen from it, just as children steal their games from serious tasks. (MK 58: 64–65/133)

I wonder at these people who say, "How can the saints and the lovers love that ineffable world, since it has no place or form and is beyond description? How can they derive replenishment and aid from it and be affected by it?" After all, they themselves are occupied with the same thing night and day. Take this person who loves another person and derives replenishment from her: After all, this replenishment, kindness, goodness, knowledge, recollection, thought, joy, heartache—he derives all these things, and all dwell in the world of No-place. Moment by moment he receives replenishment from these meanings and is affected by them, but this does not cause him any wonder. Yet he wonders how some people are in love with the world of No-place and draw replenishment from it. (F 38–39/50)

In man there is a love, a pain, an itch, and a desire such that, if a hundred thousand worlds were to become his property, he would still gain no rest or ease. These people occupy themselves thoroughly with every kind of craft, skill, and position; they learn astronomy, medicine, and other things, but they do not find ease, since their goal has not been attained. After all, the Beloved is called "heart's ease," since the heart finds ease through Him. So how could it find ease and peace through others?

All these diversions and goals are like a ladder. Since the rungs of a ladder are no place to take up residence, but exist only so that you can pass on, happy is he who quickly comes to himself and awareness! Then the long road becomes short, and he does not waste his life on the ladder's rungs. (F 64/75)

Whether love is from this side or from that side, in the end it leads us to that side. (M I 111)

Consider it a blessing that you have suffered loss in the lane of love: Leave aside derivative love, the goal is love for God.

The warrior gives a wooden sword to his son so that he may master it and take a sword into battle.

Love for a human being is that wooden sword. When the trail reaches its end, the object of love will be the All-Merciful. (D 336–338)

Love for God, moreover, is the result of knowledge: When has a man ever sat in foolishness upon such a throne?

How could imperfect knowledge give birth to this love? It gives rise to love, but love for inanimate things. . . .

Deficient knowledge cannot discriminate: It considers lightning to be the sun. (M II 1532–33, 35)

When the vulgar set out on a chase, they are hunting pig: They take infinite pains, but their prey is unlawful to eat.

Love alone is worth hunting—but how can you catch it in your snare?

Unless, perhaps, you become His prey: Leave aside your snare and enter His! (M V 408–410)

5. NEED AND ASPIRATION

To become God's prey, one must make oneself worthy of His regard and favor. The first step in this direction is to seek and desire Him. The Beloved will not ignore sincere devotion and need.

When someone hears that in a certain city a generous man is bestowing tremendous gifts and bounties, naturally he will go there in hope of receiving a share. Since God's Bounty is so famous and the whole world knows about His Kindness, why do you not beg from Him? Why do you not desire robes of honor and purses of gold? You sit in indolence and say, "If He wants to, He will give me something," and you do not make a request. Look at the dog, which has neither intellect nor comprehension. When hungry and without food, it comes to you and wags its tail. It means, "Give me food, since I have no food, and you have some." It has this much discernment. Now really, you are not less than a dog, which is not content to sleep in the ashes and say, "If he wants to, he will give me some food." It barks and wags its tail. You also, wag your tail and ask from God! Beg, for in the face of such a

Benefactor, begging is tremendously desirable. Since you have no good fortune, ask for it from someone who is not a niggard and possesses great wealth. (F 171–172/180)

They say that in the end, love is the want and need for something. Hence need is the root, and the needed thing is the branch. I say: After all, when you speak, you speak out of need. Your need brings your words into existence. Since you desired these words, they came into being. So need is prior, and the words came into being from it. Hence need existed without the words, and love and need cannot be the words' branch.

Someone said: But the goal of the need was the words. So how can the goal be the branch?

The master answered: The branch is always the goal—the tree's roots exist for the sake of its branches. (F 139/148)

Almighty God does not bestow anything without need.

Had there been no need for the world, the Lord of the world's inhabitants would not have created it.

If this quaking earth had not needed mountains, would He have created them in their majesty?

Had there not been need for the spheres, He would not have brought the seven heavens from nonexistence.

The sun, the moon, these stars—how could they have come visibly into existence had there been no need?

So the noose of all existences is need: Man's instrument is the extent of his need.

So, oh needful man, quickly increase your need! Then the Sea of Bounty will gush forth in generosity.

These beggars and cripples in the road display their need to people—

Blindness, lameness, illness, and pains—so that people's mercy will be moved.

Does a beggar ever say, "Oh people, give me bread, for I have wealth, warehouses, and a spread table!"? (M II 3274–83)

Where there is pain, cures will come; where there is poverty, wealth will follow.

Where there are questions, answers will be given; where there are ships, water will flow.

Spend less time seeking water and acquire thirst! Then water will gush from above and below. (M III 3210–12)

The cry was heard, "Oh seeker, come! Like a beggar, bounty is in need of beggars!"

Bounty is searching for beggars and the poor, just as fair women search for an unblemished mirror.

The mirror makes fair faces beautiful, beggars bring forth generosity from behind the veil. (M I 2744–46)

Indeed, hunger is the sultan of remedies. Place hunger in the soul—regard it not with such contempt!

Hunger makes all unpleasant things pleasant—but without it, all pleasant things are rejected.

A man was eating bread made from bran. Someone asked him, "How is it you have an appetite for this?"

He replied, "When hunger has been doubled through patience, barley bread becomes halva in my eyes." . . .

God has given hunger to His elect so that they may become mighty lions. (M V 2832–35, 38)

Hunger gives pleasure, not fresh sweetmeats—hunger makes barley bread better than sugar. . . .

Pain renews old medicines and lops off the branch of every indifference.

Pain is an alchemy that renovates—where is indifference when pain intervenes?

Beware, do not sigh coldly in your indifference! Seek pain! Seek pain, pain, pain! (M VI 4296, 4302–04)

Where there is pain, the cure will come; where the land is low, water will run.

If you want the water of mercy, go, become low! Then drink mercy's wine and become drunk! (M II 1939–40)

I will run quickly, quickly, to reach the riders; I will become nonexistent, nothing, to reach the Beloved.

I have become joyful, joyful—I am a spark of fire. I will burn my house and travel to the Desert.

I will become dust, dirt, so that Thou canst make me verdant. I will become water and prostrate myself all the way to the Rosegarden.

Fallen from the heavens, I waver like a dustmote—I will attain security and stop my trembling when I reach the Goal.

The spheres are a place of honor, the earth a place of destruction—I will escape from these two dangers when I reach the Sultan.

This world of earth and air is the substance of unbelief and annihilation—I have entered the heart of unbelief in order to reach faith.

That balanced and harmonious King of the world seeks a balanced lover—my face is as yellow as gold coin so that I may be placed in His Balance.

God's Mercy is water—it moves only towards low ground. I will become dust and Mercy's object in order to reach the All-Merciful.

No physician gives pills and medicine without an illness—I will become totally pain so that I may reach the Remedy. (D *1400*)

Since the Remedy of the world is searching for pain and illness, we have cut ourselves off from remedies and are pain's companion. (D 35477)

Love is a physician searching for the ill—otherwise, why should I be sick and infirm? (D 33964)

Indeed, no lover seeks union without his beloved seeking him.

But the love of lovers makes their bodies into bowstrings, while the love of beloveds makes them happy and plump.

When the lightning of love for the loved one flashes in *this* heart, know that there is also love in *that* heart.

When love for God has doubled in your heart, without doubt God has love for you.

You have never heard one hand clapping without the other.

The thirsty man laments, "Oh sweet water!" The water also laments, "Where is the drinker!"

This thirst in our souls is the attraction of the Water—we belong to It and It belongs to us. (M III 4393–99)

Of course, love and the regard of friendship always come from both sides. The stimulation of desire and the occasion for ardor derive from both directions, since love for God or for the creature is not one-sided, nor has it ever been. One cannot conceive of the sound of one hand clapping, nor can one dance on one foot. *He loves them* is never separate from *they love Him*, nor is *God is well-pleased with them* ever without *they are well-pleased with Him* (V 119). (MK 98: 102/195)

All kings are enslaved by their slaves, all creatures in love with their lovers. . . .

The heart-ravishers' hearts are prisoners to those who have lost their hearts, all beloveds prey to their lovers.

When you deem a man a lover, know that he is also a beloved, for relatively speaking, he is both this and that.

Although the thirsty seek water from the world, yet water in the world is also seeking the thirsty. (M I 1736, 39–41)

I bear the name "lover," but indeed He has no patience without me—the love of my Beloved has passed the limit of my love. (D 25028)

Lovers themselves do not seek—in the whole world, there is no seeker but He. (D 4471)

Lovers must seek the Beloved, running on their faces and heads like a torrent to His stream.

But He alone is the Seeker, and we are like shadows. Oh, our words are all the words of the Beloved! . . .

We sit with Him and say, "Oh Beloved, where is the Beloved?" Drunk, we sing "Where? Where?" in the Beloved's lane. (D 4650–51, 57)

Marvellous! The Beloved is with you in the midst of your seeking! He holds your hand wherever you wander. (D 27421)

Through Thy radiance, stones become rubies! Through Thy seeking, seekers reach the Sought! (D 32450)

He does all the seeking, yet His title is "Sought"; He does all the worshiping, yet His title is "Worshiped". (D 30467)

When the heart was annihilated within Him, He remained; then it understood the object of His words: "I Myself am the Seeker and the Sought." (D 13517)

When you see love within yourself, add to it so that it may increase! When you see in yourself your capital—your quest for God—add to it through questing! For "In movement are blessings." If you add not to it, your capital will leave you.

You are not less than the earth. Men change the earth by moving and turning it with shovels, then it yields crops. When they abandon it, it becomes hard. Since you see that the quest is within yourself, come and go! Do not say, "What profit is there in going?" Just go! The profit will show itself. When a man goes to his shop, the profit of his going is to display his need. Then God gives him his daily bread. But if he sits at home, that would be to claim self-sufficiency, and his daily bread would not come to him.

I wonder at this tiny infant who cries, and its mother gives it milk. If it should think, "What profit is there in crying? What is it that causes milk to come?"—then it would not receive any milk. But we see that it receives milk because of its crying. (F 215/222)

How should the infant know the effect his cries have upon hearts? . . .

So weep, even if you do not know the result! The everlasting gardens and rivers of paradise will be born from your tears. (D 11090, 92)

Whether he runs or walks, in the end the seeker will find.

Occupy yourself totally with seeking, for seeking is a good guide upon the Path! (M III 978–979)

Every hungry man finds food in the end—the sun of good fortune will shine down upon him. (M V 1755)

Look not at your own beautiful or ugly form—look at Love and the Object of your search!

Look not at your own vileness and weakness—look at your aspiration, oh noble man!

In whatever state you may be, seek! Seek water constantly, oh man of dry lips!

For your dry lips give witness that in the end you will find a fountain.

The lips' dryness is a message from the water: "If you keep on moving about, without doubt you will find me."

Seeking is a blessed movement, seeking kills obstacles on the way to God.

Seeking is the key to your objects of desire, it is your army and the victory of your banners. (M III 1437–43)

Whether you are pure or impure, flee not. For nearness to Him increases purity. (D 7096)

Whatever you possess—were you not once seeking it? Your searches alert you and give you good news.

Act such that your seeking may increase: He who plants a great deal may hope for a bountiful harvest. (D 3753–54)

If you are a believer, then enter the line of battle! A feast has been prepared for you in heaven. . . .

Shed tears and burn in your seeking all night, like a candle beheaded by flames.

Shut your lips to food and drink, hurry to the table of heaven! . . .

If you are taken there, no wonder! Look not at your own incapacity—look at your seeking!

Your seeking is God's deposit within you, for every seeker is worthy of the object of his search.

Strive so that your seeking may increase, so that your heart may leave this pit of the body! (M V 1727, 29–30, 33–35)

Whatever mate you desire, go! Become obliterated in your beloved! Assume the same shape and attributes!

If you want Light, then gain preparedness for Light! If you want distance from Him, become self-seeing and distant!

And if you want a way out of this ruined prison, turn not away from the Beloved, *but prostrate yourself and draw nigh* (XCVI 19). (M I 3605–07)

Whatever makes you tremble—know that you are worth just that! That is why the lover's heart is greater than God's Throne. (D 6400)

God will give you what you seek. Where your aspiration lies, that you will become, for "The bird flies with his wings, but the believer flies with his aspiration." (F 77/89)

Everyone in the 18,000 worlds is in love with something, and the eminence of every lover depends upon the eminence of his beloved. When a beloved is more subtle, refined, and noble-substanced, then the lover is greater. . . . The day-bird must be preferred to that of night, to the same extent that light is preferred over darkness, for it is in love with the sun's light, while the night-bird loves darkness. (MK 1: 4/35)

The lover's grandeur is measured by that of his beloved. Oh poor lover, see to which group you belong! (D 27832)

Man is like a jewel that determines its own worth: No Sanjar or Qubād was ever happy as a sheriff![9] (D 26027)

6. THE RELIGION OF LOVE

Love for God implies theory, practice, and realization. The lover discerns the true Beloved from derivative beloveds, augments his seeking and need through spiritual discipline under the guidance of a shaykh, and negates all things other than the Beloved, including himself, so that only He remains.

Love's creed is separate from all religions: The creed and denomination of lovers is God. (M II 1770)

What is the *mi'rāj* of the heavens? Nonexistence. The religion and creed of the lovers is nonexistence. (M VI 233)

My religion is to live through Love—life through this spirit and body are my shame. (M VI 4059)

The intellect does not know and is bewildered by the Religion of Love—even if it should be aware of all religions. (D 2610)

In the religion of the lovers, that spirit is mortally ill whose illness does not make him worse every day. (D 3610)

Everything other than love for the most beautiful God is agony of the spirit, though it be sugar-eating.

What is agony of the spirit? To advance toward death without seizing hold of the Water of Life. (M I 3686–87)

The worst of all deaths is to be without Love. Why does the oyster tremble? For the pearl. (D 13297)

Every breast without the Beloved is a body without head.

The man far from Love's snare is a bird without wings.

What does he know of the universe? For he knows nothing of Those Who Know. (D 7576–78)

If Love's pulse does not beat within a man, let him be Plato, he is but an ass.

If a head is not full of Love, that head is behind the tail. (D 12330–31)

If you have not been a lover, count not your life as lived, for on the Day of Reckoning it will not be counted.

Any time that passes without Love will be shamefaced before God. (D 10315–16)

A lifetime without Love is of no account. Love is the Water of Life—drink it down with heart and soul!

Know that all but the lovers are fish without water, dead and desiccated, though they be viziers. (D 11909–10)

The school is Love, the teacher the Almighty—and we are like students, these words our recitation. (D 4534)

The lovers' teacher is the Beloved's Beauty: Their book and lesson are His Face. (M III 3847)

Choose Love, Love! Without the sweet life of Love, living is a burden—as you have seen. (D 32210)

In the two or three days you live in this world—what a shame to live only by spirit!

Never be without Love, lest you be dead—die in Love and remain alive!

The subsistent things, the deeds of righteousness (XVIII 47) are Love. This world is chaff and Love is wheat. The wind of death's fixed term will take away the chaff—a single fleck will not remain. May *their light running before them* (LXVI 8) always be the outcome. Persevere in your intention, and encourage, advise, and aid your friends to do the same, for this is the work, the rest is all regret. The dominion of this world is like a drum whose beating bewilders people and attracts them to it, yet it is empty within—it has no excellence or profit. Happy is he who finds the druggist's tray (*ṭablah*) of Love and whose heart turns cold toward the sound of the drum (*ṭabl*) of this world's dominion.

From end to end the world's dominion brings naught to your head but headache. Empty head! Why lay so much headache on your head?

Though you make the sun and moon your head's crown, you will be placing your head on cold brick once your life comes to a head. (MK 21: 26–27/71–72)

Love is the Water of Life and will deliver you from death. Oh, he who throws himself into Love is a king! (D 6563)

Love is the bottomless Ocean of Life—everlasting life is the least of its gifts. (D 23469)

A call reached the lover from the world of his inmost mystery: "Love is God's Burāq, put it to the gallop!" (D 13550)

Mount upon Love and think not about the way! For the horse of Love is very sure-footed.

Though the path be uneven, in a single bound it will take you to the waystation. (D 6922–23)

Love is a mother who will take her child—the lover—before the Sultan only in safety.

Until he has matured and become free from his spirit, she will not take him before that Spirit of the spirit of the spirit. . . .

May my spirit be sacrificed to Love! For the only place it takes the heart is on a *mi'rāj* to the heavens. (D 10374–75, 77)

The Burāq of love for the meanings took my intellect and heart. Where did it take them? To that side you know not! (D 32300)

When the Burāq of Love arrives from heaven, it will deliver the Jesus of the spirit from this ass, yes indeed! (D 30917)

Oh falcon-like heart of mine! Fly toward the hand of His Love with His Love's wings! How long will you fly with your own wings? (D 26330)

Thou art the Spirit of the spirit of the world, and Thy name is Love: Whoever receives a wing from Thee flies to the empyrean. (D 9522)

Love is the alchemist's elixir: It makes the earth into a mine of meanings. (D 8583)

Your sensuality is copper, and the light of Love is the elixir: Love's light transmutes the copper of your existence into gold. (D 9003)

A whole world sleeps in the night of heedlessness, but we live in the daylight of Love's sun.

None but the lover basks in the light of day—Love and ardent desire will keep you in daytime's radiance. (D 8523–24)

In face of His Love's joy and His sun's light, what is the body? Dust. And the spirit? Vapor. (D 31524)

What sort of Beloved is He? As long as a single hair of love for yourself remains, He will not show His Face; you will be unworthy of union with Him, and He will give you no access. You must be completely repelled by yourself and the world and be your own self's enemy, or else the Friend will not show His Countenance. So when our religion resides in a person's heart, it stays right there until it takes his heart to God and separates it from everything unworthy. (F 114–115/125–126)

The joy and heartache of the lovers is He, the wages and salary for their service He.

Were aught to be contemplated other than the Beloved, how would that be Love? That would be idle infatuation.

Love is that flame which, when it blazes up, burns away everything except the Beloved.

It drives home the sword of *no god* in order to slay other than God. Consider carefully, after *no god* what remains?

There remains *but God*, the rest has gone. Bravo, oh great, idol-burning Love! (M V 586–590)

You are God's lover, and God is such that when He comes, not a single hair of you will remain.

Before His glance, a hundred like you are annihilated. Is it that you are in love with your own negation, sir?

You are a shadow in love with the sun. The sun comes, and the shadow is quickly naughted. (M III 4621–23)

Oh Love, pass the bitter judgment! Cut me off from other than Thyself! Oh torrent, you are roaring. Roar! You take me to the Ocean. (D 35823)

The world has appeared as if by sorcery, but Love is Moses' staff, swallowing it down in a single gulp. (D 12850)

For ages, oh Beloved, I have beaten Thy love's drum to Ḥallāj's tune: "Verily in my death is my life." (M VI 4062)

The shaykh said, "Oh Creator, I am a lover. I sin if I seek aught but Thee.

If I should bring the eight paradises into my view or serve Thee for fear of hell,

Then I would be a believer, seeking safety. For both of these are the body's share."

A lover's food is love for God—in his eyes a hundred bodies are not worth a bean. (M V 2713–16)

Marvellous, victorious, splendorous Love! It gambled and lost the two worlds and the spirit, but it keeps on gambling. (D 35052)

The beloved said, "You have done all these things, but open your ears wide and listen well:

You have not accomplished the root of the root of love and devotion—what you have done is the branches."

The lover said, "Tell me, what is that root?" She said, "To die and become nonexistent." (M V 1252–54)

Everyone born into the world dies and entrusts his spirit to the guardian angel—but the lover was never born: Love has no father. (D 11936)

In former times my heart and Love worked together—little by little, I remember that now.

Outwardly it appears that I gave birth to love, but in truth Love gave birth to me. (D 2487–88)

Someone asked, "What is the Way?" I said, "This way is to abandon desires."

Oh lover of the King! Know that your way is to seek the pleasure of that Generous Lord.

When you seek the Beloved's desire and pleasure, seeking your own desire is forbidden.

The spirit will be totally transformed into love for the Beloved, for the ascetic cell of the noble travelers is Love.

His Love is not less than the top of some mountain—His Love's mountaintop is enough for me!

The cave where you can find the Friend is Love—then the spirit will gain the adornment of Love's beauty.

Whatever purifies you is the correct road—I will not try to define it.

Be silent and hold fast to the shaykh—Love—for in the two worlds, he is your leader. (D *374*)

He who seeks felicity is one thing, the lover something else—he who loves his head has not the feet for Love.

How should Love's two fire-filled eyes, drowned in the liver's blood, search for the heart's desire and the spirits' subsistence?

The lover does not weep for his sorry state, nor does he rub his eyes from heartache: He wants to be worse each instant.

He does not want a day of fortune, nor does he seek a night of ease—his heart stays concealed between night and day like dawn.

The world has two nests: good fortune and affliction—by God's Holy Essence, the lover is outside them both!

The ocean does not make him boil, for he is an unparalleled pearl. His face has not come from the mine, even if it is yellow like gold.

In love with the spirit's King, how should the heart seek a kingdom? Enraptured by His slender waist, how should the spirit seek a robe of honor?

Should a phoenix enter the world, the lover would not seek its shadow, for he is drunk with love for that famous Phoenix.

If the world should become all sugar, his heart would still lament like the reed; and if the Beloved should say "No!" he will still melt like sugar.

I asked my Lord about Shams al-Dīn of Tabriz, whose permanent abode is Love: "Why should such a king go on a journey?" (D *586*)

Lovers, who die knowingly, die like sugar before their Beloved.

On the day of Alast they drank the Water of Life—so they cannot die like others.

Since they have been resurrected in Love, they do not die like these people in the crowd.

Through God's Gentleness they have passed beyond the angels—far be it from them to die like humans!

Do you suppose that lions die like dogs, far from His Presence?

When lovers die in their journey, the spirit's King runs out to meet them.

When they die at the feet of that Moon, they all light up like the sun.

The lovers, who are each others' spirit, die in their mutual love.

The water of Love soothes their aching livers, they all come and die in that heartache.

Each is an unparalleled orphan pearl—they do not die next to mothers and fathers.

Lovers fly to the spheres, deniers die in the depths of the Blaze.

Lovers open the eye that sees the Unseen, the rest all die blind and deaf.

In fear the lovers never used to sleep at night—now they all die without dread or danger.

Those who worshiped fodder here were all cows—they die like asses.

Those who sought that vision today die happy and laughing in vision's midst.

The King places them next to His Gentleness—they do not die in the lowliness and insignificance you see.

Those who seek to acquire the virtues of Muhammad die like Abū Bakr and 'Umar.[10]

Far from them is death and annihilation! But I have sung this ghazal supposing they were to die. (D *972*)

If you do not know me, then ask the dark night—night is the lover's confidant, the witness of his lamentation and tears.

Why talk of night? For the lover displays a thousand signs, the least of which are tears, yellow cheeks, a frail body, and failing health.

In weeping he is like the clouds, in perseverance like the mountains, in prostration like water, in lowliness like dirt in the road.

But all these afflictions surround his garden like thorns—within it are roses, the Beloved, and a flowing fountain.

When you pass by the garden's wall and enter into its greenery, you will give thanks and prostrate yourself in gratitude:

"Thanksgiving and praise belong to God! For He has taken away autumn's cruelty. The earth has blossomed, spring has shown its face!

A thousand naked branches have put on robes of flowers! A thousand desert thorns have lost their teeth!"

How should the man of intellect know the sweetness of heartache for the Beloved? He is like a weaver who knows not the arts of war and horsemanship.

The lovers are your brother, mother, and father—for they have all become one, kneaded together by Love.

When a thousand corpses are thrown into the saltmines, they all become salt—no duality remains, no "man from Marv" or "man from Balkh."

Do not pull in the reins of speech because of the thickheadedness of your bored listeners! Behold the thirsty angels in heaven when you pronounce your words! (D *3041*)

In God's eyes, whoever has no tint of Love is naught but wood and stone.

Love wrings water from rocks, Love cleans rust from mirrors.

Unbelief has come in war, faith in peace—Love strikes fire to both peace and war.

In the ocean of the heart Love opens its mouth and like a whale swallows down the two worlds.

Love is a lion, without deception and trickery, not a fox one moment and a leopard the next.

When Love provides replenishment upon replenishment, the spirit gains deliverance from this dark and narrow body.

From the beginning Love is all bewilderment—it stuns the intellect and dazzles the spirit.

Oh east wind, my heart is in Tabriz—take my salaams there without delay! (D *1331*)

Off with you! Know that the lover's religion is contrary to other ways, for false dealings from the Friend are better than sincerity and kindliness.

What is unthinkable for Him is the actual state, His chastisement the reward, all of His tyranny justice, His slander equity.

His harshness is soft, His synagogue the Kaaba—the thorn driven home by the Heart-ravisher is sweeter than roses and basil.

When He is sour, He is more excellent than a house of sugar; when He comes to you in annoyance, He is all affection and kisses.

When He says to you, "By God, I am sick of you!", that is Khiḍr's elixir from the Fountain of Life.

When He says "No!" a thousand yea's are hidden within it; in this religion of the selfless, He becomes family and self by remaining a stranger.

His unbelief is faith, His stones all coral, His miserliness generosity, His offenses all forgiveness.

If you taunt me and say, "Your religion is bent out of shape!"—well, I have bought the religion of His bent eyebrow for the price of my spirit.

This bent religion has made me drunk! Enough! I will shut my lips—you continue, oh illuminated heart, and recite the rest silently!

Oh Lord! Oh Shams of God Tabrīzī! What sugar you pour down! You voice a hundred arguments and proofs from my mouth! (D *1869*)

7. LOVE AND THE INTELLECT

As we have seen, the word "intellect" is ambiguous out of context. It is a reality with many dimensions, the lower of which are intimately connected with the ego, but the higher of which are of the same substance as the angels. Man must strive to overcome his partial intellect, which is dominated by the ego. He must seek the guidance of the Universal Intellect, which is embodied in the prophets and saints. Ultimately he must find the Universal Intellect within himself and come totally under the sway of his own angelic nature.

We have already seen that "the angel and the intellect were one, but they assumed two different forms for God's purposes" (M III 4054). Moreover, there is no doubt that the intellect—whether partial or universal—is created, since "the first thing God created was the Intellect." Hence, when man attains the station of annihilation, the Intellect within him is also annihilated; or rather, he leaves the Intellect behind. In the station of "I am God," only God remains. There cannot be an intellect through which man knows God, since there is not even man, but only Absolute Oneness.

These limitations of the intellect and even the Universal Intellect are expressed symbolically in the accounts of the Prophet's ascent to God's Presence during his *mi'rāj*: Gabriel, who was the Prophet's guide and is the embodiment of the Universal Intellect, was only able to take him as far as the Lote Tree of the Far Boundary on the outermost edge of the seventh sphere. When the two of them reached this point, Gabriel told the Prophet that he could go no farther without burning his wings. So the Prophet ascended the last stages alone.

Since Love brings about man's annihilation and subsistence, it transcends the intellect, which, from this point of view, is looked upon as an obstruction in Love's path. The juxtaposition of Love and intellect plays an important role in much of Sufi literature, and Rūmī's works are no exception. However, the criticisms Rūmī makes of the intellect from the point of view of Love must never be taken out of the context of his whole teachings, within which the intellect plays a major and positive role. For it is no less than the necessary preparation for Love and man's guide to the doorway of God's sanctuary, just as Gabriel was a necessary guide on the Prophet's *mi'rāj*. But as for the last step of the journey, that can only be traveled upon the legs of Love and self-naughting.

God gave you two hands, meaning, "Grasp my skirt!" He gave you an intellect so that you might follow the path to heaven.

For intellect is the same in kind as the angel and runs toward it. You will see it if you hide yourself from the mirror's surface. (D 32545–46)

When the sun goes, what remains? Black night. When the intellect departs from the head, what remains but foolishness?

Oh intellect, everyone's troubles stem from your departure! Then you lay the blame upon the body without an intellect.

Wherever you turn your back are found error and war, wherever you show your face are seen intoxication and passionate love. (D 31643–45)

This is good: an intellect from that side, effective in looking toward the ultimate end, free of cupidity and sensuality, and prepared for Love. (D 25715)

The intellect is that which, constantly, night and day, is agitated and restless from its meditation, effort, and striving to comprehend the Creator—even though He is uncomprehended and incomprehendible. The intellect is like a moth, the Beloved a candle. As much as the moth throws itself upon the candle, it is burned and destroyed. But the

moth is that which, however much it suffers harm, burning and pain, cannot do without the candle. (F 36/47)

Without doubt, only angelic attributes are Love's confidant: You are still caught in the attributes of asses, demons, and beasts. (D 30358)

Where do angels find food? From the beauty of God's Presence—the moon and the planets seek nourishment from the world's sun. (D 21945)

Intellect is good and desirable to the extent it brings you to the King's door. Once you have reached His door, then divorce the intellect! From this time on, the intellect will be to your loss and a brigand. When you reach Him, entrust yourself to Him! You have no business with the how and the wherefore. (F 112/122–123)

Know that the intellect's cleverness all belongs to the vestibule. Even if it possesses the knowledge of Plato, it is still outside the palace. (D 5141)

Intellect is like a magistrate. When the Sultan comes, the miserable intellect slinks off to a corner.

Intellect is a shadow, God the sun: How can a shadow stand up to the sun? (M IV 2110–11)

Before Thee, who is the Universal Intellect? A child just entering school. Compared to Thy perfection, what does the Intellect possess other than a beard and a turban? (D 26889)

At the words of my Heart-ravisher, the intellect flew from my head. The Universal Intellect did not catch a scent of the rest of the story—so what place was there for me? (D 19160)

Even if Thou settest a fire which consumes the Universal Intellect's garden, Thou wilt make thousands of gardens from non-intellect and madness. (D 26573)

When Muḥammad passed the Lote Tree and Gabriel's observation post, station, and limit,

He said to Gabriel, "Come, fly after me!" He replied, "Go! Go! I am not your match!"

Again he said, "Come, oh burner of veils! I have still not reached my zenith."

He replied, "Oh my sweet glory! If I fly beyond this limit, my wings will burn."

This tale of how the elect become senseless before the most elect is bewilderment within bewilderment! . . .

Oh Gabriel! Although you are noble and mighty, you are neither moth nor candle.

When the flaming candle sends its invitation, the moth's spirit does not hold back from being consumed! (M IV 3801–05, 07–08)

In the screaming gale of Love, the intellect is a gnat. How can intellects find space to wander there?

When the journey went beyond the Lote Tree, Gabriel held back from Muḥammad:

"I will burn if I come, for in that place there is only Love and naughting." (D 7600–02)

I am with the King, I am both slave and King—how can Gabriel find room where there are only God and I? (D 34953)

I had wings like Gabriel—six hundred wings were mine. When I arrived at *His* side, what use were wings? (D 5791)

Without the Burāq of Love and the effort of Gabriel, how will you reach those stations like Muḥammad? (D 30751)

The partial intellect is a vulture, oh destitute man! Its wings are connected to carrion eating.

The intellect of the saints is like Gabriel's wing—it takes you mile by mile to the shade of the Lote Tree. (M VI 4138–39)

The partial intellect is a denier of Love, even if it pretends to know the mysteries.

It is clever and knowledgeable, but not naughted—as long as the angel is not naughted, it is a demon. (M I 1982–83)

If you build yourself a hen house, try not to put a camel inside it—with its long neck.

The hen is the intellect and the house your body; the camel is the beauty of Love, with its stature and upright head. (D 31168–69)

Trying to explain Love, the intellect fell down in the mud like an ass—Love and loverhood can only be explained by Love.

The sun is the sun's proof: If you must have proof, then turn not your face away from it. (M I 115–116)

Like a shark Love has again shown its head, smashing the intellect's rowboat in Love's ocean. (D 13877)

Do not listen to tales of Love's heartache from a rational man, for he has cold lips and chin.

Have you or anyone else ever seen an icebox give a sign of fire? (D 24887–88)

He that is fortunate and a confidant of the mysteries knows that cleverness is from Iblis and love from Adam.

Cleverness is to swim in the sea. But the swimmer can hardly escape—in the end he will drown.

Leave off swimming, abandon pride and spite! This is not the Oxus or some stream, this is the Ocean!

What is more, it is a deep Ocean with no sanctuary—it swallows down the seven seas like a straw.

Love is a ship for the elect: Misfortunes are few, most are saved.

Sell your cleverness and buy bewilderment! Cleverness is opinion, bewilderment vision.

Sacrifice your intellect before Muḥammad! Say, *God is enough for me* (XXXIX 38), for He suffices. . . .

Make yourself a simpleton and follow the saint: You will find salvation only by being a simpleton.

Hence, oh father, that king of men, the Prophet, said, "Most of the people of paradise are simpletons."

Since cleverness is your pride and fills you with wind, become a simpleton so that your heart may remain healthy,

Not a simpleton warped by buffoonery, but one distraught and bewildered in God.

Those women who cut their hands were simpletons—simpletons in relation to their hands, but they gave notice of Joseph's face.

Sacrifice your intellect for the love of the Friend; in any case, all intellects come from His side.

The true possessors of intellects have sent their intellects to that side; the fool has remained on this side, where the Beloved cannot be found.

If your intellect departs from your head in bewilderment, every hair on your head will become a head and an intellect. (M IV 1402–08, 19–26)

In the glory and splendor of Love, you will find many intellectual concepts other than these.

Beside this intellect of yours God has many intellects, governing the intermediate causes of the heavens.

Through this intellect you gain your daily bread, but through that other you will make the spheres your carpet.

When you sacrifice your intellect in love for God, He will give you ten like it, or seven hundred. (M V 3233–36)

If you have a heart, lose it! If you have an intellect, become mad! For the partial intellect is a boil on love's eye. (D 24224)

Though Iblis had knowledge, he had nothing of religion's love, so he saw naught in Adam but an imprint in clay. (M VI 260)

The intellect's splendor is not embraced by the seven heavens—oh Love, why has it gone into thy trap and bag?

Though the intellect is but a single grain from Love's granary, all your feathers and wings are attached to it. (D 22989–90)

He who has not seen Thy Beauty makes the intellect his kiblah—a blind man carries a cane instead of a lamp. (D 11437)

Love has no thoughts, for thought is a cane. The intellect's cane shows it is blind. (D 16734)

Oh intellect! You were copper and then Love made you gold. You are not the elixir, you are the science of the elixir. (D 36313)

Until Thy Love burns my intellect to ashes, I am heedless, not intelligent—Come! Come! Come! Come! (D 1790)

If intellect is a judge, then where is its diploma and license? Seeing the outcome of affairs, patience, dignity, and faithfulness.

If Love is a confidant, then what is the mark of its confidence? All but the Face of the Friend is annihilated in its vision. (D 4901–02)

The intellect's merchandise is evidence, but Love's is to give up the spirit: At the time of contemplation, it scatters the spirit's pearls.

If you fasten together a thousand spirits, hearts, and intellects, they will not take you to His window without Love. (D 9485–86)

Lovers and men of intellect do not mingle, since no one mixes the broken with the unbroken.

In caution, men of intellect pull back from a dead ant; without cares, lovers trample upon dragons. (D 25018–19)

Men of intellect become broken before Him out of necessity, but lovers become broken with a hundredfold free will.

Men of intellect are His slaves in chains, but His lovers are sugar and candy.

Come unwillingly! is the bridle of the men of intellect; *Come willingly*! (XLI 11) is springtime for those who have lost their hearts. (M III 4470–72)

On guard against drowning, men of intellect flee from it—but lovers have no work and profession except drowning in the Ocean.

Men of intellect gain ease when given ease; lovers consider bondage to ease a disgrace. (D 20656–57)

The intellect says, "The six directions are limits and there is no way out." Love says, "There is a way, and I have traveled it many times."

The intellect saw a bazaar and began to trade; Love saw many bazaars beyond the intellect's bazaar. . . .

The lovers who quaff the wine's dregs have many ecstacies within; the dark-hearted men of intellect are inwardly full of denial.

The intellect says, "Do not go forward, for annihilation contains only thorns." Love says to the intellect, "The thorns are in you."

Enough! Silence! Extract the thorn of existence from the heart's foot! Then you will see many rosegardens within yourself. (D 1522–23, 25–27)

Do not remain a man of intellect among the lovers, especially if you love that sweet-faced Beloved.

May the men of intellect stay far from the lovers, may the smell of dung stay far from the east wind!

If a man of intellect should enter, tell him the way is blocked; but if a lover should come, extend him a hundred welcomes!

By the time intellect has deliberated and reflected, love has flown to the seventh heaven.

By the time intellect has found a camel for the hajj, love has circled the Kaaba.

Love has come and covered my mouth: "Throw away your poetry and come to the stars!" (D *182*)

8. BEWILDERMENT AND MADNESS

The sign of the man of intellect is sober rationality and cold cognizance of his own situation and that of the world. But the lover is bewildered, distraught, and mad.

Who can describe the work of the Ineffable? I have only spoken like this because I have no choice.

Sometimes He shows Himself in one way, sometimes in the opposite way—the work of religion is naught but bewilderment,

Not a bewilderment that turns you away from Him, but one that drowns you in the Friend and intoxicates you with Him. (M I 311–313)

Love for Thee bewilders, vision of Thee delights—for the Ocean does that and the Pearl does this. (D 7766)

Let me wash my heart of all knowledge, let me make myself heedless of self: One must not go before the auspicious Beloved as a master of all sorts of sciences.

The spirits of madmen know that this spirit is the shell of the spirit: For the sake of this knowledge, you must pass beyond knowledge into madness. (D 19447–48)

Lay the blame upon yourself, not upon the manifest signs of religion! How can a bird of clay fly to religion's celestial sphere?

A bird's loftiest soaring place is the air, for it has grown up from sensuality and self-will.

So be bewildered, saying neither yes nor no! Then Mercy may send you a means.

Since you are too dull to understand these wonders, if you say yes, you will be pretending.

And if you say no, that no will lop off your head—it will make Severity shut your window.

Therefore be bewildered and distraught, nothing less, so that God's help may come to you from before and behind.

Once you have become bewildered, dizzy, and annihilated, then your spiritual state will say, *Lead us on the Straight Path!* (I 5)

Severity is truly awesome, but once you begin to tremble, that awesomeness becomes soft and smooth;

For the awesome shape is aimed at the denier—once you become helpless, it turns into Gentleness and Kindness. (M IV 3746–54)

Whoever tastes religion's sweetness—how should he enjoy the world's honey?

What do you want with an intellect like yours, turned upside down by a little wine?

Sell your intellect and buy only bewilderment! Such a purchase will bring you gain. (D 10446–48)

Art Thou the sun, or Venus, or the moon? I don't know. What dost Thou want from this bewildered madman? I don't know.

In this court of Ineffability all is Gentleness and Harmony—what plain art Thou, what meadow, what court? I don't know.

In the celestial field crossed by the Milky Way, the stars are gathered about Thee like Turcomans. What tent art Thou? I don't know.

Thy Face has made my spirit roses, violets, narcissus, and lilies; Thy Moon has illuminated my moon. What companion art Thou? I don't know.

What a marvellous ocean within the heart, full of fish and shoreless! I have never seen such an ocean, I do not know such fish.

The kingship of creatures is a tale, as insignificant as a kingcup—no king do I know but that Subsistent King.

Marvellous, infinite Sun—all of Thy dustmotes are speaking! Art Thou the Light of God's Essence? Art Thou God? I don't know.

Thy comeliness is burning the souls of a thousand Jacobs to cinders—oh Joseph of beauties, why art Thou in this well? I don't know.

Be silent! For you are a talebearer, you are drowned in constant change. At one moment you are *hū*, at another *hā*, at another *āh*—I don't know.

I will be silent, for I am drunk from the spell that has overcome me. I do not know selflessness and intoxication from awareness. (D *1436*)

Oh enemy of my intellect! Oh remedy of my ignorance! I am a vat, and Thou art the wine fermenting within.

Thou art the First and the Last, Thou art the Outward and within the head (Koran LVII 3), Thou art sultan and shah, chamberlain and guard.

Thou art sweet natured and ill-natured, heart-burning and heart-soothing, moon-faced Joseph and an obstacle, a veil.

Thou art exceedingly fresh and verdant, very comely and fine—Thou art in my mind like the intellect and upon my ear like a ring.

Thou art far away and self, before and more, ill-thinking friend, venom and elixir.

Oh Ambusher of the selfless, oh Treasurer of the dervishes! Oh Lord, how joyful are the fakirs when Thou art in their embrace!

On the day I am sober, I am full of drunken brawling—but when I am drunk, what patience and silence! (D *2602*)

Every day He brings me madness, He presents me with another game—for I am His toy, bewildered at His games. (D 19410)

Although your intellect is flying upward, the bird of your imitative knowledge is feeding upon the ground.

Imitative knowledge is the bane of our spirit: It is a borrowed thing, and we sit complacently saying, "It is ours."

You must become ignorant of this intelligence: You must become mad!

Whatever you see as profitable, flee from it! Drink poison and pour away the water of life!

Curse anyone who praises you! Lend your profit and capital to the indigent!

Abandon security and stay in frightful places! Throw away reputation, become disgraced and shameless!

I have tested the far-seeing intellect—after this I will make myself mad.

One night the king, Sayyed-i Ajall, said to Dalqak, "You ran off hastily and married a harlot.

You should have consulted with me and I would have found a chaste woman for you."

He replied, "I have married nine pious and chaste women, and each one became a harlot, while I wasted away in grief.

I married this harlot without any introduction to see what would happen in the end.

I have tested the intellect many times—from now on, I will seek a seedbed for madness." (M II 2326–37)

In this path, anything other than confusion and madness is distance and alienation from God. (M VI 609)

Behold how the madmen have jumped up and been delivered from the shackles of existence! See how they have set their hearts on losing them, for these hearts are snares of affliction. (D 423)

Just as intellects are bewildered by my madness, I am bewildered by the frozen state of these intellects.

Ice enveloped by shadows will not melt—it cannot see the rays of my shining sun. (D 18256–57)

Intellect ate some opium from Love's hand: Now watch out for intellect's madness!

Today both mad Love and rational intellect are mad.

The Oxus, which had begun to flow because of love for the Sea, has become the Sea—the Oxus has been obliterated.

When it reached Love, it saw an ocean of blood—intellect sat in the blood's midst.

The waves of blood crashed down upon its head and took it away from all six directions toward the Directionless,

Until it lost itself completely and became nimble and well proportioned in Love.

While lost, it reached a place where the earth and the heavens did not exist.

When it wanted to go forward, it had no feet—but if it had sat, it would have suffered great loss.

Suddenly it saw from the other side of both obliteration and the universe an Ineffable Light,

One banner and a hundred thousand spears. It became enthralled by that Gentle Light:

Its feet had been stuck but began to move; forward it went in that incredible plain,

Hoping to pass Yonder and be delivered from self and everything below.

Two valleys appeared upon its path, one full of fire and the other roses.

A call came, "Go into the fire and find yourself in the rosegarden of ease!

But if you enter the rosery, you will find yourself in fire and furnace.

Either fly to the heavens like Jesus, or fall to the depths like Korah!"[11]

Flee and seek the sanctuary of the spirit's king so that you may escape every snare,

That Sun of Religion and Pride of Tabriz, who is greater than any attribute you give him! (D *1931*)

My madness has become the capital of a hundred men of intellect, my bitterness has become an ocean of sugar eating. (D 27721)

Be mad and distracted like you were! Why have you become rational and sober?

Thinking is for the sake of acquisition—but you have become bestowal from head to foot! (D 28080–01)

Oh people! Oh people! You will not find human nature in me! Even a madman could not conceive of what I have conceived in my heart!

The madman's star has been eclipsed, he has fled from my commotion—I have mixed with death, I have flown into nonexistence. (D 14490—91)

Oh Saki, the intellects entered into the house with madness! They poured blood into madness' cup until it spilled over!

The thirsty men and women have burned a hundred thousand houses of existence, showing their manliness in madness. . . .

Do you not see that the moth of madness keeps on throwing itself upon the candle because of Love's overpowering force?

As soon as the spirit and heart heard the tale of madness from the intellect, they stuffed their ears with cotton so as not to hear the tale of the two worlds. (D 29743–44, 46–47)

Oh happy and respectable man! Am I mad, or are you? Drink a cup with me, leave aside blame! (D 872)

C.

Separation and Union

God's Love brings the universe into existence, and its reflection within the creatures provides the motive force for every single activity found in the world, from that of the smallest atom to that of the stars and the heavens. It finds its fullest reflection in man, in whom derivative love may once again become true Love.

In the path of Love and spiritual realization, the lover undergoes two fundamental experiences: union (*wiṣāl*) with the Beloved and separation (*firāq, hijrān*) from Him. Like all sets of opposites, these two terms are relative. In practice this means that there are an infinite number of degrees of each. One station may be considered "union" in relation to what has come before, but "separation" in relation to a higher station. Moreover, until the traveler reaches the very highest stages of sanctity, the station of union will be temporary, followed by at least a relative separation. The well-known Sufi terms "expansion" (*basṭ*) and "contraction" (*qabḍ*) refer to the experience of various degrees of relative union and separation. Even the "ups and downs" which all people experience in their everyday lives are dim reflections of these spiritual states.

At the highest stages, "union" is equivalent to "subsistence" in God. Subsistence in turn is the other side of annihilation: Annihilation, or the negation of self, results in subsistence, or the affirmation of Self. Union with God is self-annihilation, so separation from Him is self-existence. As long as man continues to live under the illusion of the real existence of his own ego, his own selfhood, he is far from God. Only through negation of himself can he attain to union with Him.

Since true existence and true life lie in subsistence and union, separation is death. So just as the term "death" may mean the dissolution of the body, or much more commonly, the annihilation of self, so also it may mean what we normally call "life," that is, existence without the Beloved, separation. When Rūmī speaks of having died many times, he may be referring to either of these last two meanings. In any case, his point is the same: During the spiritual journey, man undergoes consecutive experiences of separation and union, or death and life. But each time he dies and is reborn, he moves closer to the ultimate station of subsistence and "I am God."

> The lovers die at every moment, for their dying is not of one kind.
>
> The lover has received two hundred spirits from the Spirit of Guidance, and he sacrifices them all at every instant.
>
> For every spirit he receives ten in return—read the Koran: *Ten the like of it* (VI 161). (M III 3834–36)
>
> My life is union with Thee, my death separation—Thou hast made me unparalleled in both arts. (D 21253)
>
> Union with Him is the Night of Power (Koran XCVII), separation from Him the night of the grave—the night of the grave sees miraculous generosity and replenishment from the Night of His Power. (D 6169)

God's Love, through which the world comes into existence, manifests itself in keeping with the two fundamental categories of Attributes: those of Severity and Gentleness. As we have already seen, the whole universe—all its oppositions, conflicts, and variegations—derives from the harmonious interaction of these two Attributes. For the lover, they manifest themselves as separation and union. Hence, both separation and union are performing the same task: making the Hidden Treasure manifest. Through their interplay man is led ever upward toward the full and complete manifestation of the Attributes which are reflected within himself.

In describing the innumerable spiritual stations and states experienced by the lover, the Sufi poets employ a wide range of images and symbols. Although these are drawn from the world of "forms," they are chosen deliberately for the particular "meanings" they express—meanings which are unveiled for the Sufi in his visions and ecstacies. Many of them take on the character of technical terms in Sufi literature.

Like other Sufi poets, Rūmī employs imagery which possesses a particular technical significance, as I will attempt to illustrate in coming

chapters. Even so, the general sense of his verses is always easy to grasp, once a simple principle is understood: Whatever the lover says concerns his Beloved.

> When I start from the beginning, He is my leader; when I seek my heart, He is its ravisher.
>
> When I strive for peace, He intercedes for me; when I go to war, He is my dagger.
>
> When I come to the gathering, He is the wine and the sweetmeats; when I enter the garden, He is the narcissus.
>
> When I go down to the mine, He is the ruby and carnelian; when I dive into the sea, He is the pearl.
>
> When I cross the desert, He is the oasis; when I ascend the spheres, He is the star.
>
> When I show my fortitude, He is my breast, when I burn from heartache, He is the censer.
>
> When I enter battle at the time of war, He keeps the ranks and leads the army.
>
> When I go to a banquet at the time of joy, He is the saki, minstrel, and cup.
>
> When I write letters to my friends, He is paper, pen, and ink-well.
>
> When I awaken, He is my new awareness; when I go to bed, He enters my dreams.
>
> When I seek a rhyme for my poetry, He eases the way for my mind.
>
> He stands above whatever form you can picture, like painter and pen.
>
> No matter how much higher you look, He is still higher than that "higher" of yours.
>
> Go, abandon speaking and books—much better it is to let Him be your book.
>
> Be silent! For all six directions are His Light; and when you pass beyond the directions, He Himself is the Ruler.
>
> I have preferred Thy Pleasure over my own; Thy secret is mine, so I keep it hidden.
>
> Marvellous sun of Tabriz! Like the sun, he is exceedingly worthy of himself. (D *2251*)

In the following passage from the *Mathnawī* Rūmī explains in a more didactic manner and within the context of separation and union how the lover is concerned only with his Beloved. The passage also warns of the danger of false Sufis who have stolen the outward form

of Sufi imagery without understanding its meaning and employ Sufi terminology for their own gain. By "Language of the Birds" he means the language spoken only by the bird of the spirit that has flown to the sky of God's Presence.

The vulgar have learned some of the Language of the Birds and claimed for themselves pomp and leadership.

But those words are only the form of the birds' calls: The unripe man is heedless of their spiritual states.

Where is a Solomon who knows the birds' speech? If a demon seizes Solomon's kingdom, he remains an outsider.

The demon stands there in Solomon's likeness. He possesses the science of deception, but not the science of *We have been taught the Language of the Birds* (XXVII 16).

. . .

Understand that you are a bird of this world's air, for you have not seen the birds from His Presence.

Phoenixes dwell on the other side of Mount Qāf—not every imagination can attain that place,

Only the imagination that has contemplated Unification, and then, after direct vision, has undergone separation;

Not a definitive separation, but one for a good purpose, since that station is secure from all separation:

In order to preserve the spiritualized body, the Sun pulls back from the snow for a moment.

For the sake of your own soul, seek well-being from the saints! Beware, do not steal terminology from their speech!

Zulaykhā made everything a name for Joseph, from rue-seed to incense.

She hid his name in those names, but she gave knowledge of the secret to her confidants.

If she said, "The wax has become soft from the fire," she meant, "That friend has become warm with me."

If she said, "The moon has risen, look!" and if she said, "That willow branch has become green,"

And if she said, "The leaves are rustling beautifully," and if she said, "The incense is burning sweetly,"

And if she said, "The rose has told a secret to the nightingale," and if she said, "The king has revealed his love for Shahnāz,"

And if she said, "How auspicious is fortune!" and if she said, "Shake out the bedclothes,"

And if she said, "The watercarrier has brought water," and if she said, "The sun has risen,"

And if she said, "Last night they cooked a potfull," or "The vegetables have been done to perfection,"

And if she said, "The bread has no salt," and if she said, "The heavens are revolving backwards,"

And if she said, "My head has begun to ache," and if she said, "My headache is better"—

If she praised something, she was praising his embrace; and if she blamed something, she was blaming separation from him.

If she piled up a hundred thousand names, her aim and her desire was always Joseph. (M VI 4010–13. 15–33)

These lines are a key to understanding all of Rūmī's imagery: If he praises, he is praising union with the Beloved; and if he blames, he is blaming separation. It is not really necessary for a reader to understand any of Rūmī's technical terms for him to understand the purport of many or most of his verses. However this may be, familiarity with Rūmī's basic imagery can help us understand how closely Rūmī follows Zulaykhā's example.

1. SEPARATION AND SUFFERING

The Sufi poets often "blame" the Beloved in terms which make one think that at the least, they are showing discourtesy toward their Creator. For the Beloved can sometimes be cruel, enjoys inflicting suffering on the innocent, and revels in shedding their blood.

Alas! Alas! A faithful person like me desiring a blood-eater like Thee!

Alas! Alas! Thou art a blood-shedding physician at the side of the weeping patient.

These cruelties Thou hast inflicted upon me—no lover inflicts them upon his lover.

I said to Him, "Do you want to shed my blood without any offense or sin on my part?" He said, "Yes,

Love kills none but the innocent: My Love will not kill a sinner.

At every moment I burn down rosegardens. What are you to Me? A thorn.

I have smashed a thousand joy-strumming harps. What are you in My claws? A string.

My army has devasted the cities. Who are you? A broken-down wall." (D 33679–86)

The basic point of such verses is that man in his self-existence cannot see things the way they are. Death to self, which appears outwardly as suffering and torment, is in fact the source of all joy, and the "joys" we normally experience are torments, for they keep us far from God. Since man is attached to himself, he suffers through the afflictions he meets. But these afflictions are all Mercy hidden in the guise of Wrath. God makes him suffer so that he will abandon attachment to himself and strive to attain to Self. Moreover, once the traveler has caught a glimpse of union, his separation is bitter tribulation, far worse than any suffering the world can inflict. The fundamental problem of most men is that they do not realize that every hardship and pain they undergo is only a shadow of their separation from God. Some men dwell in even greater illusion, however, since they do not know that their very existence is nothing but pain and suffering.

> For example, someone has been bound fast by four pegs. He imagines that he is happy; he has forgotten the joy of freedom. When delivered from the pegs, he will understand what torment he was going through. In the same way, infants find nurture and ease in a cradle while their hands are bound. If a grown man were bound in a cradle, that would be torment and prison. (F 194/203)

The first step on the road to deliverance is thus to realize that one is constantly suffering pain and torment, that one's spirit is bound fast by the four elements and desires only to escape. As we have already seen, Rūmī considers this awareness of pain (*dard*) as the doorway to the path of Love, and he advises us, "Seek pain! Seek pain, pain, pain!" (M VI 4304) Man cannot truly understand the meaning of pain and "suffering" (*ranj*) until he becomes aware of his state of separation. The more aware he is, the more he suffers.

> Whoever is more awake has greater pain,
> whoever is more aware has a yellower face. (M I 629)

The prophets and saints are the most aware of all creatures. This is why the Prophet said, "Those who suffer the most tribulation are the prophets, then the righteous, then the most excellent after them, and so on."

> There is an animal called the porcupine that
> becomes large and fat if you beat it with a stick.
> The more you beat it, the more it thrives,
> growing fat on the blows of the stick.

> The believer's spirit is in truth a porcupine, for the blows of suffering make it large and fat.
>
> That is why the suffering and tribulation inflicted upon the prophets is greater than that inflicted upon all the world's creatures. (M IV 97–100)

Hence man must not flee suffering; he must welcome it in the knowledge that it increases his love for its opposite, the joy and ecstacy of union. The more man suffers, the more he desires to be free of the source of his suffering: his self-existence. Heartache (*ghamm*) and the cruelty (*jafā'*) inflicted by the Beloved make way for joy (*shādī*, *surūr*) and His faithfulness (*wafā'*). Trials and tribulations are all necessary stages of purification, through which man is delivered from attachment to himself and the world. At the same time, his reaction to suffering shows his worth. If he tries to flee it through various stratagems, he is in fact fleeing God. He must not flee his pain and heartache—which come to him from God—but his own self. The only way to flee from suffering is to seek refuge from one's own ego with God. But having chosen God, man has also chosen to accept with equanimity whatever He wishes to give. Any other course of action shows that he is still attached to self. Finally, Rūmī often points out that a cruelty inflicted by the Beloved is better than the kindliness and faithfulness of all the creatures of the world.

> In order to pull us up and help us travel, messenger after messenger comes from that Source of existence:
>
> Every heartache and suffering that enters your body and heart pulls you by the ear to the promised Abode. (D 35486–87)
>
> He has afflicted you from every direction in order to pull you back to the Directionless. (D 3952)
>
> Happy is the spirit awakened from slumber by His chastisement! Rejoicing in it, it counts it a blessing. (D 5995)
>
> Between God and His servant are just two veils; all other veils become manifest from these two: health and wealth. He who is healthy says, "Where is God? I don't know and I don't see." As soon as he begins to suffer, he says, "Oh God! Oh God!", and he begins sharing his secrets with Him and talking to Him. So you see that health was his veil, and God was hidden under his pain. So long as man has riches, he gathers together all the means of achieving his desires. Night and day he busies himself with them. But as soon as he loses

his wealth, his ego weakens and he turns round about God. (F 233/240)

Someone said: I have been negligent. The master said: A thought and reproach comes to a person, so he says, "What am I doing? Why am I doing it?" This is proof of God's love and favor: "Love remains so long as reproach remains." For one reproaches friends, not strangers.

Now reproach is of different kinds. When someone is reproached and feels pain from it and is made aware of it, that is proof that God loves and favors him. But if he is reproached and feels no pain, that is no proof of love. For example, they beat a carpet with sticks to remove the dust. An intelligent man would not call this "reproach." But if a man beats his own beloved child, this is called "reproach," and in such cases it is a proof of love. So as long as you see pain and regret in yourself, that is proof of God's love and favor. (F 23/35)

The Heart-keeper will leave you neither in faithfulness nor cruelty, neither in denial nor acknowledgment.

Whenever you turn your heart toward something, His Severity will detach you from it—oh heart, fix not your heart on any place, do not persist! (D 11949–50)

Oh friend, seek no joy when the Beauty desires heartache, for you are prey in a lion's claws.

Should the Heart-ravisher pour mud on your head, welcome it in place of Tartarian musk.

Within you hides a dog-natured enemy that can be repelled only with cruelty.

When someone beats a rug with a stick, he is not beating the rug—his aim is to get rid of the dust.

Your inward is full of dust from the veil of I-ness, and that dust will not leave all at once.

With every cruelty and every blow, it departs little by little from the heart's face, sometimes in sleep and sometimes in wakefulness. (D 12074–79)

The grapes of my body will become wine only after the Vintner stomps upon me with His feet.

I surrender my spirit, like grapes, to His stomping, so that my inmost consciousness may revel in joy.

Although the grapes keep on weeping blood and saying, "I have had enough of this injustice and cruelty,"

The Stomper puts cotton in His ears: "I am not pressing out of ignorance.

If you wish to deny, you have an excuse, but I am the Master of this work.

When you reach perfection through My efforts and treading, then you will thank Me exceedingly." (D 17584–89)

Should heartache enter your mind and ambush your joy, yet it prepares the way for happiness.

Quickly it sweeps all others out of the house so that joy may come to you from the Source of good.

It shakes the yellow leaves from the branch of the heart, so that fresh leaves may grow continuously.

It pulls up the root of old happiness so that a new ecstacy may stroll in from Yonder.

Heartache pulls up withered and crooked roots so that no root may remain concealed.

Though heartache may extract many things from the heart, in truth it will bring something better in return. (M V 3678–83)

Fire flees from water because water puts it out.

Your senses and thoughts are all fire, but the senses and thoughts of the shaykh are sweet light.

When the water of his light drips upon your fire, it sizzles and jumps up.

As it sizzles and splatters, call it "death" and "pain"—until this hell of your ego becomes cold. (M II 1255–58)

First Thou emptiest the lovers through the anguish of separation, then Thou fillest them with gold to the tops of their heads! (D 29753)

A spiritual fire will come to roast you, but if you jump back like a woman, you are an unripe cuckold.

If you flee not from the fire, you will become completely cooked—like fresh baked bread, you will be the chief and the dear one at table. (D 32967–68)

You are the shame of all men if He should draw a sword in cruelty, and instead of going forward you hunt for a shield. (D 30536)

If you want to attain the spirit and achieve laughing good fortune, then laugh like a rose whether you see gentleness or cruelty. (D 35587)

Pain is man's guide in every work. Unless he senses a pain for that work, until desire and love for that work appear within him, he will not set out to perform it. Without pain, he will not be able to accomplish it, whether it be success in this world or in the next, trade or kingship, the religious sciences or astronomy, or whatever it may be.

As long as Mary did not feel the pain of childbirth, she did not go toward the tree of good fortune. *And the pangs of childbirth drove her to the trunk of the palm tree* (XIX 23). That pain took her to the tree, and the barren tree bore fruit. The body is like Mary, and each of us has a Jesus within him. If the pain appears, our Jesus will be born. But if no pain comes, Jesus will return to his Origin on that same hidden road by which he came. We will be deprived of him and reap no benefit.

> Your inward spirit is poor, but your outward animal nature is rich—the devil has indigestion, but Jamshīd is starving.[12]
>
> Remedy the situation now while your Jesus is here on earth! When he goes to heaven, the cure will be lost. (F 20–21/33)

If man should see himself at all, if he should see that his wound is deadly and gangrenous,

Then from such looking within, pain would arise, and pain would bring him out from behind the veil.

Until mothers feel the pain of childbirth, the child finds no way to be born.

The Trust is within the heart and the heart is pregnant; all the exhortations of the saints act as a midwife.

The midwife says, "The woman has no pain. Pain is necessary, for it will open a way for the child."

He that is without pain is a brigand, for to be without pain is to say "I am God."

To say "I" at the wrong time is a curse, but to say it at the right time is a mercy. (M II 2516–22)

The body is pregnant with the spirit, the body's suffering is the pain of childbirth—the coming of the embryo brings pain and torment for the woman.

Look not at the wine's bitterness, look at the joy of the drunkards! Look not at the woman's affliction, look at the hope of the midwife! (D 24291–92)

Sorrow for His sake is a treasure in my heart. My heart is *Light upon light* (XXIV 35), a beautiful Mary with Jesus in the womb. (D 5990)

How much the Beloved made me suffer before this work settled into the eye's water and the liver's blood!

A thousand fires and smokes and heartaches—and its name is Love! A thousand pains and regrets and afflictions—and its name is Beloved!

Let every enemy of his own spirit set to work! Welcome to the spirit's sacrifice and a pitiful death!

Look at me, for I see Him worth a hundred deaths like this—I do not fear or flee the Heart-keeper's slaying!

Like the Nile's water, Love's torture has two faces: water to its own people, blood to others.

If incense and candles did not burn, what worth would they have? Incense would be the same as a branch of thorns.

Had war no blows of the sword and spears and arrows, Rustam would be no different from a catamite.

Rustam sees that sword sweeter than sugar, the arrows raining down better than gold coins. (D 12063–69)

Oh friend, Love must have a little pain! The heart must have pain and the cheeks must be a little yellow.

Without pain in the heart and fire in the breast, your claim of fervent devotion is a bit insipid. (D 13970–71)

Oh Love, everyone gives thee names and titles—last night I named thee once more: "Pain without remedy." (D 65)

I wonder at that seeker of purity who flees cruelty at the time of polishing.

Love is like a lawsuit, and to suffer cruelty is the witness: If you have no witness, your lawsuit is lost.

Be not grieved when this Judge asks for your witness: Kiss the serpent and find the treasure! (M III 4008–10)

Hey! Tell us in *our* language! Speak not in symbols, speak openly! How long will You drink blood in cruelty? Oh, all Your traits are bloody!

How long will You bite his liver? How long will you make attempts at his life? How long will You give him bad news: "Things are like this and like that."

How long will You make his lips bitter? How long will You make his nights dismal? Oh You whose lips are like sugar! Oh You whose night is the Celestial Paradise!

Does honey ever yield poison? Does vinegar rise up out of sugar? How long will You mislead, oh Greatest Misleader!

Whatever You do, Your lips tell tales of sugar! Whatever movement You make, Gentleness is buried within!

How should a cypress resemble a straw? How should gold resemble copper? How should You resemble anyone? Oh King of the Day of Judgment! (D 19103–08)

Be cruel! Thy cruelty is all Gentleness. Do wrong! Thy wrongdoing is all right-action. (D 3650)

The stone thrown by Thee is a pearl, Thy injustice better than a hundred faithfulnesses! (D 5340)

There is an infinite joy whose name is Love: The rule is to complain—otherwise, why should there by any cruelty? (D 5941)

God said, "It is not because he is despicable that I delay My gift to him: That very delay is an aid.

His need brought him from heedlessness to Me, pulling him by the hair to My lane.

Were I to satisfy his need, he would go back and immerse himself in that game.

Although he laments to the bottom of his soul: 'Oh Thou whose protection is sought!'—let him weep with broken heart and wounded breast.

For I am pleased by his voice, his saying, 'Oh God!' and his secret prayers. . . ."

People cage parrots and nightingales to hear the sound of their sweet songs.

But how should they put crows and owls into cages? Who indeed has heard tale of that? . . .

Know for certain that this is the reason the believers suffer disappointment in good and evil. (M VI 4222–26, 28–29, 37)

Let me leave aside the subject and begin to complain of that ten-hearted Beauty's cruelty.

I lament because lamentation pleases Him—the two worlds must lament and grieve for Him.

Why should I not complain bitterly of His deceptions? For I am not within the circle of those intoxicated with Him.

Why should I not lament like night without His day? For I am not in union with His Face that illumines the day.

His unsweetness is sweet in my soul—may my life be sacrificed to the Friend who gives my soul suffering!

To please my unique King I love my own suffering and pain.

I make a collyrium for my eyes from the dust of heartache, so that these two seas may be filled with pearls!

The tears people shed for His sake are pearls, though they think they are tears.

I complain of the Spirit of the spirit, but I am not a complainer, I am only relating.

My heart keeps saying, "I suffer because of Him," and I keep laughing at its weak hypocrisy. (M I 1773–82)

Oh Thou whose Face is like a rose and whose tresses are sweet marjoram! My spirit is joyful when I am in heartache over Thee! (D 4438)

Oh, my spirit is joyful over Thee—may my spirit never be without Thee! My spirit gave its heart to Thee and sits together with Thy heartache.

Heartache for a person's sake is bitter, but this heartache of Love is like sugar. Look no more at this heartache of Love as if it were heartache!

When Love's heartache leaves the breast for an instant, the house becomes a tomb and all its inhabitants grieve. (D 19365–67)

Heartache does not dare come near him who is in heartache for Thee. And if it should come, he must lop off its head. (D 21255)

The remedy for the pain in my heart is pain for Him. Why should I not entrust my heart to His pain? (D 17582)

When Thou sendest less heartache to me, I grieve and my heart constricts. But when Thou pourest down heartache upon me, I am put to shame by its gentleness.

Thy heartache has not allowed me an instant's heartache—desire for Thee has not allowed me to be water and clay. . . .

Marvellous pain Thou inflictest that becomes the cure of my pains! Marvellous dust Thou stirrest up that anoints my eyes with collyrium! . . .

Suffering for Thee allows no suffering to come to me—Thy treasure does not let me be a poor and indigent dervish. (D 15133–34, 36, 38)

So drunk am I with His injustice that I cannot discern it from justice—ask me not about His justice, gentleness, and bestowal! (D 13596)

Thy bitter cruelty makes me into a pearl, oh Spirit—for pearls and coral dwell in the sea's bitterness.

Thy faithfulness is another ocean, so sweet to drink—from it bubble up the four streams of paradise. (D 21869–70)

At the time of union, only God knows what that Moon is! For even during separation, what incredible joy and expansion of spirit! (D 30321)

The scroll of my heart extends to Eternity-without-end, inscribed from first to last, "Do not leave me!" (D 23493)

Separation and parting from Thee is difficult, oh Beloved, especially after Thy embrace! (D 13901)

People avoid death, but dying before Him is like sugar for me—life without Him is my death, glory without Him my shame! (D 18797)

To die in hope of union with Thee is sweet, but the bitterness of separation from Thee is worse than fire. (M V 4117)

Oh Thou who art our Benefactor, *make firm our feet!* (II 250)—without Thee ease is tribulation and health is sickness! (D 14698)

Thou speakest of separation and parting. Do whatever Thou wilt, but not that!

A hundred thousand bitter sixty-fold deaths are not like separation from Thy Face! (M V 4114–15)

Union with this world is separation from that world. The health of this body is the sickness of the spirit.

It is hard to be separated from this caravanserai—so know that separation from that permanent abode is harder!

Since it is hard for you to be separated from the painting, think what it will be to parted from the Painter!

Oh you who cannot bear to be without this despicable world! How can you bear to be without God, oh friend, how?

Since you cannot bear to be without this black water, how can you bear to be without God's fountain? . . .

If you should see the Beauty of the Loving God for one instant and throw your soul and existence into the fire,

Then, having seen the glory and splendor of His proximity, you would see these sweet beverages as carrion . . .

Strive quickly to find Self in selflessness—and God knows best the right course. (M IV 3209–13, 15–16, 18)

Farness from Thee is a death full of pain and torment, especially the farness that comes after union! (M VI 2894)

2. UNION AND JOY

> Oh, union with Thee is the root of all joys! For these are all forms, but that is meaning. (D 29290)

Just as no pain and suffering can even remotely compare to separation from God, no joy or ecstacy is comparable to union with Him. Again, however, we must keep in mind that there are many stages of union, some temporary and some permanent. The spiritual experiences undergone by the travelers are infinitely varied and ranked in innumerable degrees. These degrees are closely connected to the hierarchy of the saints and prophets, so that what is union for one person may be separation for another.

> That which is the essence of Gentleness for the vulgar is Severity for the noble favorites. (M IV 2982)

Rūmī describes the joys of spiritual union in a great variety of images, most of them connected with love and wine. Before we review and discuss them, it may be useful to quote the following passage, which presents a relatively didactic and non-imaginal explanation of the type of experience the saints undergo. Note that Rūmī is discussing the two broad categories of saints: the "travelers" (*sālikān*), or those who have not yet reached a permanent station of subsistence; and "those who are in union" (*wāṣilān*), or those saints who have been so utterly transformed by a station of God-consciousness that they may truly say "I am God."

> The "litanies" of the seekers and the travelers are that they busy themselves with spiritual warfare and servanthood. They have apportioned their time so that each moment has its particular task and, like an overseer, habitually pulls them to that task. For example, when a man arises in the morning, that time is most appropriate for worship. . . . There are a hundred thousand ranks. The more a person becomes purified, the higher he is taken. . . .
>
> As for the litanies of those who have attained union, I will tell of them as much as can be understood: In the morning, holy spirits, pure angels, and those creatures *whom none knows but God* (XIV 9)—whose names He has kept secret from men out of extreme jealousy—come to visit them. . . . You are seated beside them but do not see. You do not hear any of those words and greetings and laughter. . . .
>
> This is a tremendously high station. It is a waste of time even to speak about it, for its tremendousness cannot

be spelled out. If only a small portion of it could be understood, no descriptions, no hands, no aspirations would remain. The armies of Lights would destroy the city of existence: *Kings, when they enter a city, ruin it* (XXVII 34). . . .

What can I say about the stations of those who have attained union except that they are infinite, while the stations of the travelers have a limit? The limit of the travelers is union. But what could be the limit of those in union?—that is, that union which cannot be marred by separation. No ripe grape ever again becomes green, and no mature fruit ever again becomes raw. (F 122–123/132–134)

D.

Imagination and Thought

Rūmī stresses that in employing imagery and symbolism to describe the various dimensions of separation and union he is not following his own caprice and self-will. The very imagery he employs is imposed upon him from outside of himself, ultimately by God. Simplistically we could take this to mean that he has been "inspired by the Muse," but in saying this we have not really explained anything. Fortunately Rūmī alludes to the nature of his visions and the mode in which they assume the form of poetical imagery in numerous passages. By collating these we can see that he presents a clear ontological basis for his poetry, which comes to him from the "World of Imagination" (*'ālam-i khayāl*).

The "World of Imagination" as a technical term in Sufism is usually associated with the school of Ibn al-'Arabī. Although Rūmī discusses this world as such in only a small number of passages, he refers to it continuously both implicitly and explicitly. In fact, once its significance in Rūmī's teachings is understood, it becomes obvious that most if not all of his poetry is related to it.

The world *khayāl* or "imagination" presents special problems for the translator because of the wide range of realities it embraces and the relatively impoverished meaning of the word "imagination" in English. Like the word "imagination," *khayāl* refers to the mental faculty which conjures up images and ideas in the mind; but it also pertains to these images and ideas individually and collectively, and to the whole "world" or realm from which they derive. For according to Sufi psychology, the imagination does not create the images and ideas it sees, nor does it derive them from within itself, the memory,

or the mind. Rather, it receives them from a separate World of Imagination which exists independently of the mind.

The World of Imagination has a number of dimensions. In the lowest levels of this world, the individual human faculty of imagination determines the form in which images present themselves to the consciousness. In other words, each person's mental images take on a peculiar color in keeping with his own background, memories, intelligence, environment, and so forth. But in its higher levels, the World of Imagination is independent of individual man. To the extent that man gains access to this higher domain of imagination—through the visions he may receive on the spiritual path—it determines and defines his imagination, not vice versa; for it subsists on a higher ontological plane than his rational mind.

Because of the rather wide range of meanings contained within the one word *khayāl*, two different terms have been employed to translate it: "imagination," signifying the mental faculty, or the world from which its content is derived; and "image," or a form, idea, or concept contained within the imagination.

An "image" in this sense is a noncorporeal form; and in fact, Rūmī often employs the terms "form" and "image" interchangeably. As a noncorporeal form, the word "image" refers to the "forms" perceived by the mind and the heart (just as in classical texts it is also applied to the reflections of things perceived within a mirror or in water). We have already seen that "form" is something's outward aspect, as opposed to its "meaning" or inward aspect. Hence "form" can be applied to anything that exists in the material world, as well as to anything that becomes differentiated and distinct from other things on any level of existence, not just the material level. So an idea or an angel may be referred to as a "form." However, when the word "form" is used, it immediately calls to mind the "meaning" that lies beyond it and bestows existence upon it.[13]

Like form, "image" implies an opposite, though it does not call it to mind with such force. The opposite of "image" is "reality" (*ḥaqīqat*); hence, as in English, there is generally something insubstantial and "unreal" about images perceived by the imagination. But this is not always the case, for when the image derives from the higher levels of the World of Imagination, it is more real than the mind itself.[14]

The lower levels of the World of Imagination embrace all the forms, shapes, and "colors" within our minds. Thus Rūmī often employs the term "thought" (*fikr, andīshah*) synonomously with *khayāl*, either as a faculty or the faculty's content, as "imagination" or "image." But we must keep in mind that in Rūmī's view the world within the mind is the world of the spirit, even if it is only that of the animal spirit or ego. As we have seen, there are at least three universal levels

of spirit higher than the ego: the human spirit, the angelic spirit, and the spirit of sanctity. All of these levels are populated by forms which may be perceived by "imagination." But just as there is an almost infinite distance between the ego and the spirit of sanctity, so also there is such a distance between the thought and imagination of ordinary men and the thought and imagination of the saints.

> What is this talk of thought? There, all is pure light. This word "thought" is used for your sake, oh thinker! (M VI 114)

1. IMAGINATION AND THE CREATED ORDER

All imagination, which is part of the hierarchical order of the universe, is created by God and constantly gives news of Him. But most people see only the outward forms of imagination. These forms motivate them to pursue certain goals, a pursuit which is ultimately necessary for the maintenance of the world. In other words, man's imagination makes him choose various derivative beloveds rather than the True Beloved. As for the saint, he sees beyond the form of imagination to its meaning or "reality," so he desires only the Beloved.

> This world is maintained by imagination. You call it "reality," since it can be seen and perceived, and those meanings of which the world is an offshoot you call "imagination." The true situation is the reverse. The imagination is this world itself, for that Meaning brings into existence a hundred worlds like this, and they rot and disintegrate and become naught. Then It produces a new world and better. . . .
>
> An architect conceives of a building in his heart. In his imagination its breadth is so much, its length so much, its floor so much, and its courtyard so much. This is not called "imagination," for the reality of that building is born and derived from this imagination. True, if someone other than an architect should conceive such a form in his imagination, that is called "imagination." And in everyday language people say to someone who is not a builder and who has not the knowledge, "You're imagining things." (F 120/131)
>
> From imagination to imagination are many differences. The imagination of Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, and 'Alī are above the imagination of the Companions.[15] And between one imagination and another are great differences. A knowledgeable architect imagines the building of a house, and

a nonarchitect also imagines it. The difference is great, for the architect's imagination is nearer to reality. Similarly, on that side, in the world of realities and vision, there are differences between vision and vision *ad infinitum*. (F 228/235)

In relation to the world of forms and sensory things, the World of Imagination is wider, since all forms are born from imagination. But in relation to that world from which imagination comes into existence, the World of Imagination is narrow. This much can be understood through speech. But it is impossible for the reality of this meaning to be understood through words and verbal explanations. (F 193/202)

Oh God, show to the spirit that station where speech grows up without words,

So the pure spirit may fly toward the wide expanse of Nonexistence—

An expanse exceedingly open and spacious, from which this imagination and existence find nourishment.

Images are narrower than Nonexistence—therefore imagination is the cause of heartache.

Existence is still narrower than imagination—therefore within it full moons become crescents.

The existence of the world of sense perception and colors is still narrower, for it is a cramped prison.

The cause of narrowness is composition and multiplicity, and the senses drag toward composition.

Know that the World of Unity lies in the other direction from the senses. If you want Oneness, go in that direction! (M I 3092–99)

Although the sultan's body is one in form, a hundred thousand soldiers run after it.

Then this form and shape of the good king is governed by a single hidden thought.

Behold how, like a torrent, people without end have set out upon the land from a single thought.

In the eyes of men, that thought is small, but like a flood it consumed the world and swept it away.

Therefore, since you see that every work in the world subsists through thought—

The houses, castles and cities, the mountains, plains and rivers,

The land and the sea, the sun and the sky, all living from thought like fish from the sea—

Then why out of stupidity do you see your body as Solomon and your thought as an ant, oh blind man?

In your eyes a mountain is large—thought is a mouse, the mountain a wolf.

In your eyes the world is awesome and tremendous; you fear and tremble at clouds, thunder, and the sky.

But, oh you who are less than an ass, you are heedless and secure from the World of Thought, like an unaware stone!

For you are a bodily form and have no share of intellect. You have not the traits of a man, but of a young ass.

In ignorance you see the shadow and consider it the object, so the object seems to you a game and a trifle.

Wait—until the day when thought and imagination spread their wings and pinions without veil,

When mountains become soft wool, and this hot and cold earth becomes nonexistent.

You will see neither the heavens, nor the stars, nor existence—only the Living, Loving, One God. (M II 1030–45)

Hence we realize that thoughts are important, while forms are subordinate to them and mere instruments. Without thought forms are immobilized and inanimate. So he who looks only at form is also inanimate: He has no access to meaning. He is an infant and immature, even if in form he is a shaykh and a hundred years old. (F 57/70)

Imagination, thought, and concepts are the antechamber to this house. Whenever you see that something has appeared in the antechamber, know for certain that it will appear in the house. All these things which appear in this world, good or evil, first appeared in the antechamber, then here. (F 140/149)

God's formless Making plants a form, and a body grows up with senses and organs.

Whatever the form may be, it brings the body to good and evil in accordance with itself.

If the form is bounty, the body gives thanks; if the form is deferment, the body is patient.

If the form is mercy, the body flourishes; if it is a wound, it laments.

If the form is a city, the body goes on a journey; if it is an arrow, it seizes a shield. . . .

These forms are beyond limit and reckoning—all these images are the motive for action.

All the infinite customs and crafts are shadows of thought's form.

The people are standing happily upon the roof—behold the shadow of each upon the ground.

The form of thought is upon the high roof, while the act is manifest among the bodily members like a shadow. (M VI 3720–24, 27–30)

The troops of imagination arrive unwearied from behind the heart's curtain.

If these ideas do not come from a single plantation, how is it they arrive one by one at the heart?

Company after company, the army of our ideas hurries to the fountain of the heart in thirst.

They fill their jugs and go, constantly appearing and disappearing.

Know that thoughts are stars which revolve in the sky of another heaven.

If you see an auspicious star, give thanks and perform acts of charity; and if you see an inauspicious one, give alms and ask forgiveness. (M VI 2780–85)

The image-land of thought derives replenishment from your spirit, just as these shapes below derive replenishment from the revolution of the spheres.

There are spiritual spheres, other than the spheres of this world, from which gifts descend to the heavens' constellations.

Replenishment to the constellations of earth, gifts for the constellations of water, flames for the constellations of fire—all are given by a most perfect Giver.[16]

So also this constellation of the senses, ever full of perceptions: It seeks intelligence not from the senses, but from the spirit and the intellect's lightning. (D 35265–68)

In his rounds the watchman of the heart cannot see from which corner of the spirit imagination comes.

Were he to see its rising place, he would cunningly block the path of every unpleasant image.

But how can a scout reach the watchtower and fortress of Nonexistence?

Seize the skirt of His bounty like a blind man—this, oh king, is what they mean by "a blind man's taking possession."

His skirt is His commands and prohibitions—fortunate is he whose spirit is piety! (M III 3046–50)

The paintings, whether aware or unaware, are present in the hand of the Painter.

That Traceless One writes and erases every moment on their thought's page.

He brings anger and takes away contentment, He brings stinginess and takes away generosity.

Morning and evening this affirmation and obliteration does not leave my perceptions for half an instant. (M VI 3332–35)

Every instant Thou drawest a picture in our brains: We are the page of Thy script and lettering. (D 17529)

Each image consumes an image, every thought feeds upon thought.

You cannot flee imagination, nor can you sleep to escape it.

Thought is a hornet, your sleep water: When you awaken, the bees all come back—

Several hornets of imagination fly down and pull you this way and that. (M V 729–732)

This body is a guest-house, oh youth. Every morning a new guest comes running.

Beware! Do not say, "I am left with him on my neck," for in any case he will soon fly back to Nonexistence.

Whatever comes from the Unseen World into your heart is a guest—welcome it! (M V 3644–46)

The forms in my heart are welcome guests, and I am the host. (D 15992)

When man's images are beautiful, his imagination keeps him fat.

But if they display unpleasantness, he melts like wax in a fire.

If God should provide you with images of pleasant company in the midst of scorpions and snakes,

Snakes and scorpions will be your intimate friends, for your imagination will transmute copper into gold. (M II 594–597)

Man is taken to each thing by his image of that thing. His image of a garden takes him to a garden, his image of a shop to a shop. But deception is hidden in imagination. Do you not see that you go to a certain place and then regret it? You say, "I imagined it would be good, but it was not." So these images are like tents within which someone is hidden. When the images are finally removed and the realities appear without the tent of imagination, that will be the Resurrection. When this takes place, there will be no more regret. Whatever reality has attracted you will be nothing else—that very reality will have attracted you. (F 7/19)

Imagination has made a mockery of everyone, so they all search in corners for treasures.

Imagination has filled one person with the idea of splendor and turned his face towards the mines of the mountains.

Imagination has turned another's face toward the sea and he toils bitterly for pearls.

Another has gone to the church for worship, another to the fields in greed.

Imagination makes one person try to waylay those who have already escaped and drives another to become the salve of the wounded.

One has lost his heart to exorcizing the jinn, another has turned his feet toward astronomy.

These ways all gain their outward divergence from the inward variety of images.

The one is bewildered at the other: "What is he doing?" Every taster denies the next.

If the images are not incongruous, why do the outward ways diverge?

Since the Kiblah of the spirit has been hidden, everyone has turned his face in a different direction. (M V 319–328)

When our spirit is not awake to God, our wakefulness is like being shut up behind doors.

All day long the kicks of imagination, worry over profit and loss, and fear of extinction leave the spirit

No purity or gentleness or splendor, nor any way to travel to heaven.

He is truly asleep who has hope in every image and converses with it. (M I 410–413)

Thou hast made an image the superintendent of Thy creatures, so they have all imagined that Thou art imaginary.

Thy Image is the magistrate of the city of separation—but Thou art pure of that, for Thou art the Sultan of Union. (D 28856–57)

Let go of thought and bring it not into your heart, for you are naked and thought is an icy wind.

You think in order to escape from torment and suffering, but your thinking is torment's fountainhead.

Know that the bazaar of God's Making is outside of thought—contemplate His effects, oh you who are dominated by fire!

Behold that Lane from which forms are flying, that Stream which turns the mill-wheel of the heavens,

That Rose-faced Beauty who makes the faces of the heart-ravishers like roses, that Source of all temptations from whom lovers' cheeks are inflamed!

These hundred thousand birds keep flying happily from Nonexistence, these hundred thousand arrows keep streaming forth from one Bow. (D 11837–42)

2. ESCAPING IMAGINATION

The only way to escape imagination is to fan the fire of love in the heart. But paradoxically, love feeds and grows upon the image of the Beloved. So until man turns all his attention toward the Beloved and occupies his imagination only with thoughts of Him, his love will not grow and he will not be able to escape from the thoughts and images of other things. The connection between thought and meditation, alluded to above in another context (II, C, 2), comes into play here. The aim of the adept is to turn his thought totally toward God and to behold nothing but the Beloved's Image. As a result of the steady growth of his love, he will reach a point where only hunger and thirst for the Image remain. He will be taken upward step by step through alternating states of expansion and contraction until finally his imagination can no longer be distinguished from the reality outside and beyond himself. Imagination as a relatively subjective state is transformed into the Beloved's Image, which draws the lover ever upward.

A lover is a marvellous thing, for he receives strength, grows, and gains vitality from the Image of his Beloved. Why is this surprising? The image of Laylā gave constant strength to Majnūn and became his food.[17] When the image of a derivative beloved possesses the potency and effective power to strengthen the lover, why do you wonder that the True Beloved's Image should bestow strength upon the lover, both in his outward form and in the Unseen World? But how can we speak here of "imagination"? That is the very soul of Reality, that is not called "imagination." (F 119–120/130–131)

Every thought has chosen an image for itself—so when they gather together, the lovers of His Image are separate and unique. (D 5342)

Imagination in the soul seems a nonexistent thing, but behold a world driven by imagination!

War and peace, pride and shame—all derive from imagination.

But the images that trap the saints reflect the moon-faced beauties of God's Garden. (M I 70–72)

People dissipate themselves with these pretty idols; they indulge in sensuality and then regret their action.

Indulging in sensuality with an image, they remain even farther from the reality.

Your desire for an image is a wing that may take you up to the reality,

But when you indulge in sensuality your wing falls off; you become lame, and the image flees from you.

Keep your wings and do not indulge in sensuality—then the wing of desire can take you to paradise. (M III 2133–37)

Whenever you entrust your heart to a thought, something will be taken from you inwardly.

Whatever you think and acquire, the thief will enter from that side where you feel safe.

So busy yourself with that which is better, so that something less may be taken from you. (M II 1505–07)

Oh Saki of illumined hearts, raise the goblet of generosity, for Thou hast brought me from the desert of Nonexistence

So that the spirit may pass beyond thought and tear apart these veils. For thought devours the spirit, it eats it away instant by instant. (D 14620–21)

Do not think except about the Creator of thought! It is better to see thoughts of the Beloved than thoughts of bread. (D 27369)

True thought is that which opens a way, the true Way that upon which a king advances.

The true king is he who is king within himself, not through treasuries and armies—

His kingship remains forever, like the glory of the empire of Muhammad's religion. (M II 3207–09)

Men are divided into a number of classes and have different ranks in this Way. Through combat and effort, some of them reach a station whereby no matter what they may desire inwardly and in thought, they do not bring that desire into actuality. This is within a man's power. But that there should not be within man the itch of desire and thought—that is not within his power. Nothing save God's attraction can eliminate that from him. (F 128/139)

The muzzle of inward whispering is Love and nothing else—otherwise, who has ever stifled that whispering? (M V 3230)

You have seen a fire that burns every sapling. Now behold the Fire of the spirit, which burns away imagination!

Neither imagination nor reality are safe from this Fire when it flares up within the spirit.

It is the enemy of every lion and every cat: *Everything is perishing but His Face* (XXVIII 88). (M VI 2236–38)

As soon as Love opened its arms to embrace me, thought fled to the side. (D 24935)

Sweep your breast clean of thought and imagination! Drop the grass and behold the Meadow! (D 35237)

Enough of thought! Enough, for every instant it says to you, "Oh, I wonder what happened to that? Oh, what shall I do? Where is so-and-so?" (D 21764)

Take the thief of bad thoughts to prison. Tie his hands fast and lead him to the magistrate's office.

If the magistrate—the intellect—does not punish him, take the magistrate along and go to the Sultan. (D 34791–92)

Sweep the heart clean of heartache, for it is the house of His Image! The Image of that deceiving Idol is very delicate. (D 4710)

The house of my heart is empty, devoid of desire, like paradise.

Within it is no work but the love of God, no inhabitant but the image of union with Him.

I have swept the house clear of good and bad—my house is full of love for the One. (M V 2802–04)

Like a rosegarden the Image of Thy Face came and brought stories of Thy lips' sugar.

I said to it, "What news have you of the Inmost Center of the spirit? How strange that the spirit and the world have no news of your world!

Indeed, what are you and from whence is your source? What jewel are you and where is your mine?

The go-between was Love, who pulled me to you. First I am Love's slave, then yours." (D 23686–89)

Having cut myself off from heart and spirit, I sit in the road waylaying the caravan of imagination for the sake of His encounter.

Other than the servants of His heartache and the messengers of His salve, I strike the head and feet of anyone who shows his face. (D 14876–77)

In order to study Thy Image, we must be less than a wraith. (D 16516)

Noah—Thy Image—asks for an Oxus and an ocean when we pray: That is why we are swimming, with eyes like the Oxus. (D 17222)

His Image placed a ewer at the fountain of my eyes. His pretext? "I want to wash clothes in this water."

I said to Him, "How can you wash clothes in blood?" He said, "Blood is all on that side, but I am on this side.

In your direction is nothing but blood, but in My direction all is water. I am not an Egyptian—before this Nile I have the traits of Moses." (D 18301–03)

Someone asked a wise man, "What are truth and falsehood, oh man of fine speech?"

He took hold of his ear and said, "This is falsehood. The eye is truth and possesses certainty."

The former is false in relation to the latter—most sayings are relative, oh trustworthy man! . . .

Strive so that imagination may come from your ear into your eye, so that what was false may become true!

After that, your ear will take on the nature of your eye: Your two woollike ears will become pearls.

Or rather, the whole of your body will become a mirror, all will become eye and a pearl of the breast.

The ear will stir up an image that becomes the go-between for union with the Beloved.

Strive so that your image may increase, so that the go-between may be Majnūn's guide. (M V 3907–09, 20–24)

What is born from attributes and names? An image. Then the image becomes the go-between for union. (M I 3454)

For the possessors of spiritual states, whatever was at first image becomes union at last, once the Beloved comes. (D 11925)

That which is image at first becomes union one day—last night, several nonexistent images came into existence. (D 13504)

All beloveds have evaporated from before us like imagination: We have placed our Beloved's Image before our eyes. (D 16704)

In the Way of Love, His Image is like my guide: I speak about the Way, but I keep silent about the guide. (D 16913)

The Beloved's Image is like Abraham—in form an idol, in meaning an idol-smasher.

Thanks be to God that when He appeared the spirit saw its own image in His Image! (M II 74–75)

As long as the Image of the Friend dwells within our inmost hearts, our work is to serve Him and sacrifice our spirits. (M II 2573)

Thy beautiful Image flees from me like a wild animal, for my body is a form with hands and legs.

That formless Image makes me and a hundred like me disgusted with bodily forms and in love with annihilation. (D 9810–11)

The stove of my mind has again begun to heat the pot that cooks the raw: the Image of the Beloved's Love. (D 12745)

When Thy sweet-breathed Image wafts in from the Unseen, flames shoot up to the spheres from the fire of Love. (D 26296)

Separation from Thee destroys me! Thy Image has become my food: For my heart has gained a stomach, full of insatiable hunger for Thee! (D 11448)

If you are not going to bed, then sit, I am going. Tell your tale, I have told mine.

I have had enough of tales and am like a drunkard—slumber is making me lurch and fall in every direction.

Whether asleep or awake, I am thirsty for that Friend, the companion and mate of His Image's form.

Like the form in a mirror I follow that Face, displaying and concealing His Attributes.

When He laughs, I laugh, and when He becomes agitated, so do I.

Say the rest Thyself—for the pearls of meaning I have strung on speech's necklace derive from Thy Ocean. (D *1451*)

3. THE IMAGE IS ALL

The imagination of the saints has been completely transformed so that instead of perceiving the images of their own mental faculties, they perceive images at an ontological level independent of themselves. In their spiritual experiences and ecstacies they perceive the Image of the Beloved.

Give not my heart into separation's hand, for that is not seemly! Kill not him who is dying for Thee! Kill him not, oh Idol, for that is not seemly!

In Gentleness Thou hadst chosen me, why now hast Thou fled from me? Oh Thou who hast displayed faithfulness, be not cruel, for that is not seemly!

The treasurer of Thy Gentleness gave me the robe of felicity. Strip not that robe from my body, for that is not seemly!

My heart seems to be all face with no back. Turn not Thy Face away from me, turn not Thy back toward me, for that is not seemly!

I spoke of union with Thee. Thy Gentleness said yes! After saying yes, ask not why—that is not seemly!

Thou art a mine of sugar and candy—candy does not speak bitterness. Speak not bitter words to our face, for that is not seemly!

Bring those words each of which is like a spirit! Hide not the lamp in the night, for that is not seemly!

Thy heartache, which has made me frail, is neither inside nor outside the body. Heartache is a placeless fire—ask not where, for that is not seemly!

My heart has come from the World of Ineffability, Thy Image from the other side of the heart. Separate not these two travelers, for that is not seemly!

Shut not the door of the house, glance at the Sufis! Say, "Welcome!" and do not eat rice alone, for that is not seemly!

Oh heart, sleep from thought, for thought is the heart's snare. Go not to God except disengaged from all things, for that is not seemly! (D *907*)

At night Thou takest away the traveler's sleep: "Sleep not! Arise! Sit!

Sit at the image-house of the heart, behold each painting We draw!

One by one We send new paintings, so that the first may become the second's morsel,

So that you may know the true form in the heart from the false.

I have painted you in order for you to praise My brush.[18]

Tonight, all the paintings are your prey—do not remove the saddle from your horse.

Be mounted for the chase until daylight! Do not think of pillow and mattress!

Wander about the night, for it is Laylā. If you are Majnūn, do not get off your feet!" (D 20326–33)

Hear from the heart wordless mysteries! Understand what cannot be understood!

In the stonelike heart of men dwells a fire that consumes veils to their root and foundation.

When the veils have been burned away, the heart will understand completely the stories of Khidr and knowledge from God.

Ancient Love will display ever-renewed forms in the midst of the spirit and the heart. (D 21238–41)

As soon as Thy Form took up residence in my breast, wherever I sat was the Supreme Paradise.

Those thoughts and images like Gog and Magog—each one became a houri's cheek and a Chinese doll. (D 6718–19)

When His Image enters the breast in the midst of the night, behold in every corner a Joseph, in every direction a houri! (D 29800)

Thy Image is a sultan, strolling into the heart, Solomon coming to the Temple.

A thousand lamps are lit and the whole Temple is illumined—it is paradise and the Fountain of Kawthar,[19] thronging with angels and houris. (D 771–772)

When Thy Image dances into my heart, how many drunken images come along with it!

All around Thy Image they dance, Thy moonlike Image twirling in the center.

When an image brushes against Thee, it displays the sun's rays like a mirror.

My words become intoxicated through an Attribute, and a hundred times they travel from tongue to heart and heart to tongue.

My words are drunk, my heart is drunk, and Thy Images are drunk—having fallen upon one another, they gaze. (D 21098–102)

Oh, the spirit's work is pure of vanity, its sustenance pure of defilement! At every instant a form is born in the spirit's city without man and woman:

Every form better than the moon, sweeter than honey and sugar, serving my Beloved with a hundred thousand splendors and glories. (D 18948–49)

Oh Form of the spirit and Spirit of form! Thou hast broken the bazaar of the idols.

Since Thy Image is our idol, we must become idol-worshipers! (D 29473–74)

Abraham, who used to smash idols every year, was an idol-maker day and night in Thy Image-house. (D 8061)

Drunken and strolling, the Image of my Friend moves about my heart—a Moon: Noble, Infinite, King, Generous, Splendid! (D 25681)

From the time Thy Form became the heart's companion, I no longer dwell on earth but upon the heavens. (D 16448)

His Image has become the companion of fiery lovers—may Thy Form never for an instant be absent from our eyes! (D 62)

The beauty of the Unseen Form is beyond description—borrow a thousand illuminated eyes, borrow! (D 18189)

Do you know what shines into the heart's mirror? Only he who knows purity knows the Image displayed there. (D 6456)

I said to my heart, "How are you?" It said, "Increasing, for, by God, I am His Image's house."

His Image in the breast—then heartache and grief? Submerged in His Water of Life—then the danger of death? (D 19817–18)

His Image passed by and the spirit said, "That is He, the King of the cities of No-place!" (D 23344)

The Form of that Chinese Beauty will never leave my heart! The taste of His sugar will never leave my lips! (D 8113)

His Form has not left and will not leave my heart—there has never been and never will be anyone equal to or like Him. (D 22676)

Constantly Thy Image is before my eyes—wonderful dream that I see in wakefulness!

When Thy Image caresses the heart, helpless, it does not fit into its skin from the joy of Thy loving kindness. (D 27552–53)

Everything other than the Beloved's Image is love's thorn, though it be a rosegarden. (D 12266)

When Thy Image enters the lover's breast, the lamps of Life fill the house of his body.

Other images run before Thy Image, like the minds of prisoners at the cry, "Freedom!" (D 5015–16)

The Image of the Beloved suddenly lifted its head from the heart, like the moon from the horizon, like a flower from a branch.

All the world's images ran before His Image, like bits of iron in a magnet's grip. (D 432–433)

In the movements of the ritual prayer, Thy Image, oh King, is as necessary and obligatory for me as the seven verses of the Fātiḥah.[20] (D 2307)

Like Jesus, Thy Image goes into the heart to bestow a new spirit—like Divine Revelation, it descends upon Moses at the mountain. (D 19466)

Within the breast Thou paintest a Form, fatherless like Jesus—were Avicenna to try to understand it, he would be an ass on ice.[21]

Marvellous, sweet Form that contains all the world's savor-giving salt—oh Moslems, who has ever seen salt fitting for halva!

Such a form that were its radiance to reach a painting on the wall, the painting would gain a spirit and begin to talk and see. (D 35277–79)

My heart is an oyster, the Friend's Image its pearl—but now even I am not contained, for this house is filled with Him. (D 6098)

His Image kept on gazing more strongly and obliterated me in its heat.

I was naughted by that uproar, naughted, naughted! Both greatness and smallness left me. (D 33941–42)

Every night the Image of my Turk becomes the attributes of my essence—for the negation of my essence in Him is all affirmation of me. (D 5953)

Oh, I have seen my beauty in Thy Beauty! I have become a mirror for Thy Image alone. (D 23677)

The Image of the heart-expanding Moon entered my heart. Since there is neither road nor door, I wonder from whence He came.

When a lovely-faced Idol of such beauty and fairness entered, idol, idol-worshiper, and believer all prostrated themselves.

How happy is my firelike, iron heart as the locus of His Light! Does not a mirror rejoice when purity enters?

How can I give thanks for being a plantation of sugarcane? He went out by the door of cruelty and came in by the door of faithfulness!

All oppression has become faithfulness, all muddiness purity! The attributes of human nature have been annihilated, the Attributes of God have come!

All paintings have gone, the whole ocean has become blue! All pride has gone, all Glory has come! (D 8072–77)

4. BEYOND THE IMAGE

Since every form is in one sense identical with its meaning, the Image of the Beloved is none other than the Beloved's Reality. But from another standpoint, meaning transcends all formal representation: The Beloved lies beyond His Image. So even if the Beloved's Image is incomparably more real than this world, it is still less real than the Beloved Himself. Union with the Image is an exalted station on the Path, but union with the Beloved is far beyond it.

Oh Image who passest through the heart, Thou are not Image, nor jinni, nor man.

I seek for Thy footprints, but Thou treadest neither upon the earth nor the heavens. (D 31073–74)

The thought that comes into the heart speaks of the Friend—I will sacrifice my spirit to it and fill its mouth with gold. . . .

His Form is a pretext—He is the Light of Heaven: Pass beyond picture and form—His Spirit is sweet, His Spirit! (D 13373, 75)

Instant by instant the Image—His messenger—reaches me by way of the heart; an ever-renewed radiance comes to me from His Beauty and Comeliness.

Oh Lord, has this fragrance of revelry reached me from paradise? Or is it a zephyr coming to me from the day of union? (D 17125–26)

I took Thy beautiful Image into my breast—a red glow is a mark of the Sun. (D 28310)

Whatever gift I received from Thee I entrusted to Thy Image, for Thy sugar-sweet Image has Thy Glory and Countenance.

No, I am wrong, for though Thy Image is not like other images, all its beauty and fairness are Thy gift. (D 7952–53)

I have sought the likeness of Thy moonlike Image, oh Image-less One, as far as the seventh heaven—there is none. (D 4481)

Thou art my Love, and how should Love have form and shape? Thou hast assumed a form only derivatively. (D 26147)

Although Love transcends every form, yet in Love appears every beautiful Joseph! (D 27705)

What forms are possessed by the Formless Ones! What do you know of their forms? (D 28167)

That Idol is not contained by any image—do not carve idols in the image-house!

Since all idols and idol-worshipers are He, He is other than all: What are all things other than naughted in Him?

People cannot understand this, nor do I have permission to speak plainly (D 13133–35)

The Rose is from that world, it cannot be contained in this world. How should the Image of the Rose be contained in the World of Imagination? (D 14256)

If you have opened your eyes to the sun of union, then come up to the Sphere of Realities—speak no more of images! (D 14328)

Prostrate yourself to the Image of the King's Face! For the Image is vizier to the King, Reality. (D 3889)

Oh, without the Image of Thy Face, all realities are imaginary! Without Thee, the spirit in my body is a corpse in its shroud. (D 18872)

Thou art the Spirit of realities, of heart-ravishing images, and of those pictures of the moon that cannot be described in words. (D 21638)

When the spirit is delivered from infancy it enters union, free of sense perception, ideation, and imagination. (M III 4113)

I am he who carves idols from His Images—but when the time of union comes, than I smash the idols! (D 15157)

Love makes forms in separation. But at the time of meeting, the Formless shows His head and says,

"I am the root of the root of sobriety and intoxication; the beauty you see in forms is My reflection.

Now I have removed the veils, I have displayed Beauty without intermediary.

Since you have become so interwoven with My reflection, you have found the strength to view the Essence alone." (M V 3277–80)

His image increases the light in the eye, but in the presence of His union, that light is dark. (D 4727)

Oh, Thy Image has made the lovers into wraiths—such is the army of Images, what then will Thy Beauty be? (D 22763)

Oh formless Heart-ravisher! Oh unformed Form-maker! Oh Thou who hast given a goblet full of uproar to the lovers!

Thou hast shut my mouth lest I voice the mysteries, and in the breast Thou hast opened the door I cannot name.

As soon as Thy Beauty threw off its veil in secret, my heart fell to the saki and my head to the wine.

It was morning, and Thy Image went mounted on its steed. Holy spirits, innumerable as sand, went on foot.

And those who are famous for their glorification of Thee in heaven broke their rosaries and pawned their prayer carpets.

The spirit cannot bear to see Thy Face unveiled, and Thy Beauty is greater than whatever I say.

My spirit is a drunken camel following behind Thee, my body a collar around the camel's neck.

Shams of God Tabrīzī! My heart is pregnant from thee! When will I see the child born of thy auspiciousness! (D *2331*)

The King's Image has begun to stroll gracefully, clods and stones have come to life, the dead tree has begun to laugh, the barren woman has given birth.

Since His Image is so, behold how His Beauty must be! His Beauty displays itself in the Image, which cannot display Him.

His Image is sunlight shining upon the spirits, His Beauty the sun burning in the fourth heaven. (D 24336–39)

E.

Poesy and Imagery

Once the traveler has beheld the Images in which the Beloved reveals Himself, he may still not be able to describe them in words. Some of the gifted few who can do so become poets. In his role as one of the greatest of these poets, Rūmī often reflects upon how images and meanings become transformed into imagery and words. At the same time, he discusses the central role of the "Word" in his teachings and in Islam.

The heart of Islam is God's Word, the Koran, which is the direct, written reflection of God's Attribute of Speech or Word (*kalām*). Since God's Attributes are co-eternal with God Himself, the Moslems hold that the Koran in its essence exists eternally with God. At the same time God's Word is reflected integrally and totally in two other domains as well: the macrocosm, or the created universe as a whole; and the microcosm, or man.[22] In the last analysis, every individual thing is created through God's Word: "His command to something when He desires it is to say to it 'Be!' and it is" (Koran XXXVI 81). Moslem thinkers have always stressed the importance of God's creative Word in the natural order of the universe and man, just as they have emphasized the central role of His written Word in guiding man to salvation.

Rūmī has a great deal to say about words in general, in particular as the means whereby God's wisdom is expressed for man; more especially, he speaks about the way words become transmuted into poetry.

1. CREATION AND SPEECH

The root of all things is speech and words. You know nothing of speech and words and consider them insignificant. But speech is the fruit of the tree of action, for words are born from action. God most High created the world from a Word, for He said, *'Be!' and it is.*

Faith may be in the heart, but if you do not express it in words, it has no profit. Although the ritual prayer is an act, it is not valid if you do not recite in it from the Koran. When you say, "Words are of no account," you negate your own assertion through your words. If words are of no account, why do we hear you say that words are of no account? After all, you are saying this with words. (F 75/87)

Man is hidden beneath his tongue. The tongue is a curtain before the spirit's courtyard.

When a wind lifts up the veil, we observe the secret of the house's courtyard—

Whether there are pearls within or wheat, or a treasure of gold, or all is snakes and scorpions;

Or whether there is a treasure along with a serpent—since no treasure of gold can be found without a guard. (M II 845–848)

These words are for the person who needs words in order to perceive. As for him who perceives without words, what need has he for words? After all, the heavens and the earth are all words for him who perceives. They are born from words, for *'Be!' and it is.* What need has he who hears a whisper for screaming and shouting? (F 22/33)

The circumambulation of him who beholds the King takes place beyond Severity and Gentleness, unbelief and religion.

Its verbal expression has never entered this world, for it is hidden, hidden, hidden!

These fine names and words only appeared with Adam's water and clay.

Adam's leader was *He taught the names* (II 31)—but not in the garb of letters.

When Adam donned his hat of water and clay, all those spiritual names became black-faced,

For they put on the mask of words and breath so meaning could become manifest to water and clay.

Although in one respect speech removes veils, in ten respects it covers and conceals. (M IV 2967–73)

The wise man sees speech as grand—speech came from heaven, it is not something paltry.

When you do not speak good words, they are not a thousand, they are one; but when you speak well, one word is a thousand.

Speech will come out from behind the veil—then you will see that it was the Attributes of God the Creator. (D 9896–98)

My speech is imperfect and maimed, for perfect speech is only to be found Yonder.

If the saint should speak words about That, your feet will slip. But if he does not speak, alas for you!

And if he employs a formal analogy, oh youth, you cling to that very form! (M III 1277–79)

Spread not the wings of speech, for you can only fly Yonder without wings!

Everything I say is speech's skin—when has anyone discovered that mystery's kernel from its skin? (D 12683–84)

In these words of mine, seek that Meaning! My sweet breaths are His ambush,

For names are identical with the named: Adam beheld the Essence through the very Names! (D 7053–54)

2. THE WORTH OF POETRY

Rūmī had no respect for poetry as such. If poetry has any value, it is found in the meaning and message it conveys. In any case, Rūmī had no choice in his own versifying. When he says, "Listen to the reed" in the first line of the *Mathawī*, he is alluding to the fact that he himself is only a vehicle for words which were placed in his mouth.

One of my traits is that I do not like to distress anyone. . . . I am so concerned to please others that when these friends come to visit me, I dread the thought that they might become bored. So I recite poetry to keep them busy. Otherwise, what have I to do with poetry? By God, I detest poetry. In my eyes, there is nothing worse . . .

After all, a man looks to see what merchandise people need in a given city and what they will buy. Then he buys and sells that, even if it be the lowest of goods. (F 74/85–86)

My poetry is like Egyptian bread: Night passes, and you cannot eat it.

Eat it while it is fresh, before the dust settles on it!

Its place is in the tropics of the awareness—it dies in this world because of the cold.

Like a fish, it flops a moment on dry ground. A while later you see it lifeless.

If you eat it imagining it to be fresh, you will have to paint many fantastic images.

You will devour your own imagination, not these ancient words, oh man! (D *981*)

I have been delivered from this ego and self-will—alive or dead, what an affliction! But alive or dead, I have no homeland other than God's Bounty.

I have been delivered from these verses and ghazals, oh King and Sultan of Eternity! *Mufta'ilun, mufta'ilun, mufta'ilun* has hounded me to death![23]

Let a torrent take away these rhymes and specious words! They are skin! They are skin! Fitting only for the brains of poets! (D 485–487)

If you want every one of your parts to speak and compose poetry, then go, silence your speech! Do not lean upon verse and prose! (D 19487)

Thy Love has transformed every one of my hairs into a verse and a ghazal! Thy ecstacy has made every part of me a vat of honey! (D 24655)

Behold blood in my verses, not poetry! For my eyes and heart are pouring out His Love's blood.

When the blood boils up, I give it the color of poetry so that my clothing will not become blood-stained and blood-staining. (D 29787–88)

God gave me no heartache but to seek out rhymes for my verses, and then He delivered me from that too.

Take this poetry and tear it up, like old poetry! For meanings transcend words and wind and air. (D 2592–93)

God's attraction brings my words into existence, for He is nearer to me than I am to myself. (D 7393)

He who brought me from Nonexistence makes me speak at every instant. In His Generosity, He has made each of my words a pearl. (D 19019)

I was annihilated absolutely and then became God's interpreter—whether I be drunk or sober, no one hears from me more or less. (D 14705)

Be silent! But what can I do? Rain has come, and I am but a drainpipe. (D 29280)

Last night, the Friend kissed me on the lips—otherwise, why should my words be so full of savor? (D 33970)

My words are angels' food. If I speak not, hungry angels will say, "Speak! Why are you silent?"

You are not an angel, what do you know of their food? What would you do with manna? You are fit only for leeks!

What do you know of this stew from my brain's kitchen? For God directs the cooks night and day. (D 30144–46)

All the questions and answers are His—I am like a rebeck. He strums quickly meaning, "Lament!" (D 14295)

I saw His Judgment and threw away my own crooked judgment. I became His flute and wail at His lips. (D 17044)

I do not want to speak but the Saki breathes into my heart, for I am but a bagpipe. (D 17234)

I have said a great deal, oh father, but I know that you know this much: I am a headless and footless flute in the hand of the Flutist. (D 14685)

If I am full of wind, it is because I am a flute and Thou art the Flutist—since Thou art my Self, oh Beloved, I am Self-satisfied. (D 16830)

The lovers lament like reeds, and Love is the flutist. What marvellous things will Love breathe into this flute of the body!

The flute is manifest and the Flutist hidden—in any case, my flute is drunk from the wine of His lips.

Sometimes He caresses the flute, sometimes He bites it! Ah! I lament at the hands of this sweet-melodied, flute-breaking Flutist! (D 20374–76)

The only profit of speech is that it may cause you to seek and incite your desire. The goal is not realized through speech itself. If this were not so, there would be no need for all this spiritual warfare and self-annihilation. Speech is as if you see something moving from afar and then you run after it in order to see it. You do not see it from that movement at a distance. (F 193–194/202)

Concise and profitable speech is like a lit lamp that kisses an unlit lamp and departs. That is enough for it, for it has attained its goal. After all, a prophet is not that outward form. His form is his steed. A prophet is Love and Affection, and that subsists forever. (F 226–227/234)

Let me tell of Thy wonders, oh Love! Let me open a door to the Unseen for the creatures through speech! (D 14324)

Speech is a ship and meaning the sea—enter quickly, so that I may pilot the ship! (D 15985)

3. UNDERSTANDING POETRY AND SPEECH

Speech comes in man's size. Our speech is like water let loose by the keeper of the reservoir. How should the water know to which field the keeper has sent it—to a cucumber patch, an onion field, a rosegarden? I know this much: If water comes in torrents, there is a good deal of thirsty land in that place. But if little comes, there is little land; it is a small garden or a tiny courtyard. The Prophet said, "God inculcates wisdom on the tongues of preachers to the extent of the listener's aspiration." I am a cobbler. There is plenty of leather, but I cut and sew according to the size of the foot. (F 108/119)

Oh, if you only had the capacity to receive the heart's explanation from my spirit!

Speech is milk in the spirit's breast: It will not flow freely without someone to suck.

When the listener is thirsty and seeking, the preacher becomes eloquent even if he is dead.

When the listener is fresh and without boredom, the dumb mute speaks with a hundred tongues.

When a stranger enters my door, the women of the harem hide in the veil.

But if an intimate friend, free of all noxiousness, should enter, these ladies lift their face coverings.

Whatever is made good and fine and beautiful is made so for a seeing eye. (M I 2377–83)

The Koran is like a bride. Although you pull the veil away from her face, she does not show herself to you. When you investigate the Koran, but receive no joy or mystical unveiling, it is because your pulling at the veil has caused you to be rejected. The Koran has deceived you and shown itself as ugly. It says, "I am not that beautiful bride." It is able to show itself in any form it desires. But if you stop pulling at its veil and seek its good pleasure; if you water its field, serve if from afar and strive in that which pleases it, then it will show you its face without any need for you to draw aside its veil. (F 229/236–237)

I have spoken these words many times, my good man! I never become sated from explaining them.

You have eaten bread to prevent loss of weight over and over. This is the same bread, why are you not bored?

Hunger keeps on coming to you from your healthy constitution and burns away indigestion and boredom.

When a man gains the ready cash of hunger, his organs and members become married to constant renewal.

Pleasure derives from hunger, not from new sweetmeats; hunger makes barley bread better than sugar.

So your boredom is from lack of hunger and indigestion, not from the repetition of words.

Why is it you are not bored with shop, haggling, disputation, and cheating?

How is it that in sixty years you have not become sated with gossip and backbiting?

Time after time without the least boredom you have uttered blandishments in hunting a vulva.

This last time, you spoke those words with a burning and eagerness a hundred times more ardent than the first. (M VI 4292–301)

If there were no one in the audience, my words would be exalted: Either turn into light, or go! Act not with such injustice toward me!

You are like an eyeache and have stuck to my eye. Oh sir, turn your self's page, or else I will break my pen! (D 14627–28)

This mention of Moses has become a shackle on men's minds—they think these stories happened long ago.

The mention of Moses serves as a mask: Moses' light is your own coin, oh good man!

Moses and Pharoah are in your own existence—you must seek these two adversaries in yourself. (M III 1251–53)

Alas! All of this is your own situation—but you will stick it on Pharoah. (M III 972)

Ears perceive my outward words, but no one perceives my spiritual shouts.

My breath has kindled many fires in the world, my words undergoing annihilation have caused many subsistences to boil forth. (D 21930–31)

I do not speak these words, Love speaks them. On this subject I am one of those who know nothing.

For this is a story told only by those whose age is thousands of years. What do I know? I am a child of the present.

But my child is a parasite on that Eternal One, conjunction with whom gives me centuries.

I speak inverted words, for the upside-down world turns me upside-down.

Listen to my speech when my restless spirit jumps outside of these whirlpools!

The words of water and clay are intricately branched. How can I give them one color? I am in the branches.

No, I erred, for like the sun I am one-colored but hidden behind the clouds of this low world. (D 16007–13)

That is the Ocean of Oneness, wherein is no mate or consort. Its pearls and its fish are none other than its waves.

Oh absurd! Absurd! That any should ascribe partners to Him! Far be it from that Ocean and Its undefiled waves!

There is no partnership and complication in the Ocean. But what can I say to him who sees double? Nothing! Nothing.

Since we are paired with double-seers, oh idolater, it is necessary to talk as if we ascribe partners to Him.

That Oneness is on the other side of descriptions and states. Nothing but duality enters speech's playing-field.

So, either live in this duality, like the double-seeing man, or sew up your mouth and be happily silent!

Or, speak and be silent by turns—beat your drum like the double-seer, and that's all.

When you see a confidant, tell him the mystery of the spirit, and when you see a rose, sing like a nightingale.

But when you see a water-skin full of deception and falsehood, shut your lips and make yourself a vat. (M VI 2030–38)

What am I saying, oh Beloved—these two or three bob-tailed likenesses for Thee. Why do I keep comparing things to Him? What do I have? What do I know? (D 19454)

How should I boast of union with Him? How shall I describe His Beauty? For those exotic birds avoid the snare of my words. (D 18766)

How should I call Thee the "moon"? The moon suffers from consumption. If a call Thee a "cypress," that is true—but

A cypress can burn and the moon can disappear. Except the Root of the root of the spirit, nothing whatsoever has any root. (D 2053–54)

I am sick of thought, give me wine! How long wilt Thou entrust me to thought?

What deception can I employ, oh Saki, what deception? For Thou art the Creator of deception and the Deceiver.

Every instant Thou sendest me outside with some argument, since Thou art very jealous and difficult of access.

There is no "outside" or "inside," "cup" or "wine," but these are current in speech. (D 34170–73)

Come! Come! For Thou bestowest beauty and majesty. Come! Come! For Thou art the remedy of a thousand Jobs.

Come! Come! Though Thou hast never left—but I say every word to Thee in a beautiful way. (D 32451–52)

Meaning in verse can only be haphazard, for poetry is like a sling—it is not completely under control. (M I 1528)

Silence, for verses stay but meanings fly away—were meanings to remain in place, the world would be full of them. (D 26741)

Sayyid Burhān al-Dīn was teaching. In the midst of his words a fool said, "We need words without any analogies." He replied, "Come without analogy! Then you will hear words without analogies." After all, you are an analogy of your self; you are not this. Your bodily person is your shadow. When someone dies they say, "So-and-so has gone." If he was only that body, then where has he gone? Hence it is realized that your outward is the analogy of your inward, so that men may judge your inward from your outward. (F 219–220/226–227)

Whatever I say is an analogy, not an equivalence. An analogy is one thing, an equivalence another. In order to draw an analogy, God the most High compared His Light to a lamp and the existence of the saints to a glass (cf. Koran XXIV 35). This is for the sake of analogy. His Light cannot be contained by created existence or space. So how should it be contained in a glass and a lamp? (F 165/174)

I keep on seeking an analogy for Thee in the two worlds but cannot find one. Oh Lord, wilt Thou not say what Thou art like? (D 27044)

What are past and future and present to the man of No-place, within whom in God's Light?

Whether a thing is past or future relates to you; these two are but one, but you suppose they are two.

Someone is one person's father and another's son; the roof is below Zayd and above 'Amr.

The relation of "above" and "below" derives from these two persons. In itself the roof is one thing only.

But this is not equivalent to that. These words are an analogy. Old words are incapable of expressing new meanings. (M III 1151–55)

Thy Attributes cannot be understood by the vulgar without analogy, yet analogy increases the mistaken idea of Thy similarity with the creatures.

But if a lover should ascribe a form to Thee in his yearning, the Sea of Incomparability will not be tainted.

If poets compare the crescent moon to a horseshoe, their nonsense will not detract from the moon's moonliness. (D 31651–53)

There are endless differences between the physical body of a lion and that of a courageous warrior,

But when an analogy is drawn, oh discerning man, look at their unity in respect of fighting spirit.

For after all, that courageous warrior is *analogous* to the lion, even though he is not *equivalent* to it in all respects. (M IV 420–422)

The gnostic has escaped from the five senses and the six directions and makes you aware of what is beyond them.

His allusions are the allusions of Eternity; he has passed entirely beyond fantasies and drawn himself apart.

If he is not outside of this six-sided well, how will he be able to pull Joseph up from inside?

He descends from the unsupported windlass of the sky to draw water; his body, like a bucket, is inside the well giving help.

The Josephs cling to his bucket, escape from the well and become kings of Egypt.

The other buckets seek water from the well, while his bucket is free of the water and seeks spiritual companions.

The buckets dive into the water for their food, but his bucket is the food and life of the fish's spirit.

The buckets are attached to the tall windlass, but his bucket is held between the two fingers of the Almighty.

What is this bucket? This rope? This windlass? This is a very feeble analogy, oh pasha!

From whence can I bring an unfractured analogy? The gnostic's likeness has never come and never will come.

Hundreds of thousands of men are hidden within a single man, a hundred bows and arrows are contained in a single dart. (M VI 4568–78)

I have called God's ineffable Bounty a "garden" since it is the source of all bounties and the sum of all gardens.

Otherwise, that which "no eye has seen"—how should that be the place of a garden? God Himself called the Light of the Unseen a "lamp,"

But that is not an equivalence, it is an analogy. Through it the bewildered man may catch a scent. (M III 3405–06)

The ant is satisfied with a single desiccated grain because he is unaware of our green and fresh ear.

Say to the ant: "It is spring, and you have hands and feet. Why do you not leave the grave and go to the field?"

What place is this for an ant? Solomon himself has torn the cloak of yearning! Oh God, do not punish me for these rotten analogies!

But robes are cut according to the stature of the customer. Although the cloth is long, his stature is short.

Bring a tall stature, and then we will cut a robe the length of whose border cannot be measured by the moon. (D 25433–37)

4. INTERPRETATION OF IMAGERY

For Rūmī poetical imagery, whose primary function is to stir up Love in the listener, has to be fitted and shaped to men's understanding. But there can be nothing haphazard, personal, or artificial about the way this is done. As far as he is concerned, his poetry was given to him by God. In other words, he does not manufacture or devise his imagery, but he receives it from the World of Imagination, within which the Beloved manifests Himself to lovers in "imaginal" forms.

Rūmī goes to great lengths to explain the meaning of his poetical imagery, far more than most Sufi poets, who seem to have depended upon the oral tradition and the reader's insight to provide the spiritual interpretation. In the next three chapters, we will look at Rūmī's explanations of three of the major themes of all Sufi poetry: the garden, the beautiful woman, and winedrinking. Although I have separated these themes for convenience of discussion, this does not mean that Rūmī himself separates them. More often than not his poetry combines two or all three themes, while making use of others as well.

> Absorption in God is this: God makes the saints fear Him, but not like the fear that people have of lions and leopards and tyrants. He reveals to them that fear comes from God, security comes from God, joy and revelry come from God, food and sleep come from God. He shows the saint in wakefulness, while his eyes are open, sensory forms seen only by him: the form of a lion or a leopard or a fire. Hence he realizes that when he sees the form of a real lion or leopard, that is not from this world. That is a form from the Unseen which has been manifested here. In the same way he is shown his own form in magnificent beauty; and likewise gardens, rivers, houris, palaces, food, drink, robes of honor, Burāqs, cities, houses, and every kind of wonder. He knows truly that these are not from this world, but that God has displayed them to his vision and has manifested them to him in forms. Thus he knows for certain that fear is from God, security is from God, and everything that gives ease and is seen is from God. (F 44–45/56)

> First there were intoxication, loverhood, youth and the like; then came luxuriant spring, and they all sat together.
>
> They had no forms and then became manifested beautifully within forms—behold things of the imagination assuming form!
>
> The heart is the antechamber of the eye: For certain everything that reaches the heart will enter into the eye and become a form. (D 21574–76)

F.

The Garden of Spring

If union is spring, or sometimes summer, then clearly separation is autumn or winter. In singing of the garden Rūmī gives explicit expression to this opposition and at the same time ties in a number of important corresponding concepts, including the Attributes of Gentleness and Severity and the spiritual states of expansion and contraction (see table III, section I, D, 7).

> An "equivalence" is not the same as an "analogy." Thus the gnostic gives the name "spring" to happiness, joy, and expansion, while he gives the name "autumn" to contraction and heartache. But how does joy bear a formal resemblance to spring, or heartache to fall? Yet this is an analogy without which the intellect would not be able to conceive or comprehend those meanings. (F 167/176)

> Sometimes Thou burnest the veils, sometimes Thou keepest them. Thou art the secret of autumn, Thou art the spirit of spring.
>
> Autumn and spring gain their bitterness and sweetness from Thee. Thou art their Severity and Gentleness—come, show what Thou hast!
>
> Spring comes, Thou bestowest felicity; when autumn comes, Thou plantest it. (D 34321–23)

> In the Prophet's words, vision and the heart are "between God's two fingers"—just like the pen in the writer's hand, oh friend!

The two fingers are Gentleness and Severity, and between them is the pen of the heart; its expansion and contraction derive from the fingers. (M III 2777–78)

The trials of winter and autumn, the heat of summer, spiritlike spring,

Winds and clouds and lightning—all exist so the distinctions among things may become outwardly manifest,

So the dust-colored earth may expose the rubies and stones concealed in its breast.

Whatever this dark earth has stolen from God's Treasury and the Ocean of Generosity—

The magistrate of Foreordainment says, "Tell me the truth: Describe what you have taken, hair by hair."

The thief—I mean the earth—says, "Nothing! Nothing!" The magistrate puts him to twisting torment.

Sometimes he speaks gentleness to him, like sugar; sometimes he strings him up and does the worst,

In order that those hidden things may become manifest through Severity and Gentleness, through the fires of fear and hope.

Spring is the Gentleness of the Almighty Magistrate, while autumn is God's threat and intimidation.

In meaning winter is a torture chamber, so that you, oh hidden thief, may be exposed.

Therefore the spiritual warrior sometimes undergoes expansion of heart, while at other times he suffers contraction, pain, and torment.

For this water and clay—our bodies—is a denier and thief of the spirits' light.

God submits our bodies to hot and cold, suffering and pain, oh lion man,

And He inflicts upon us fear and hunger and deprives us of wealth and body, all for the sake of making manifest the spirit's true coin. (M II 2951–64)

When contraction comes to you, oh traveler, it is in your best interest. Let not your heart burn in grief!

For you expend in expansion and joy, and expenditure requires an income for stocking provisions.

Were it always the season of summer, the sun's heat would enter the garden

And burn up its beds to their very roots. That ancient place would never be green again.

Although December is sour-faced, it is kind; summer laughs, but it also burns.

When contraction comes, behold expansion within it! Be fresh, and do not throw wrinkles into your brow. . . .

The spiritual warrior sees heartache as a mirror within which the face of its opposite appears.

After suffering shows its face, its opposite, happiness and splendor, will appear.

Behold these two opposites in the fist of your hand: After contraction, expansion must come.

Were the fist always contracted or expanded, that would be an affliction.

These two attributes put its work in order; these two states are important for it, like wings for a bird. (M III 3734–39, 62–66)

This outward spring and garden are the reflection of the inward garden: The whole of this world is a single nugget, and the inward is the mine.

Hence the lover sees whatever I say in verse as the true coin of his spiritual state, but the man of intellect sees only an idle tale. (D 20482–83)

Oh brother! For a time cling fast to your intellect: Moment by moment spring and autumn are within you.

Behold the garden of the heart, green and fresh and new, full of rosebuds and cypress and jasmine—

So many leaves that the branches are hidden, so many roses that the plain and pavilion are concealed!

These words—which derive from the Universal Intellect—are the fragrance of that rosebud and cypress and hyacinth. . . .

The meaning of dying is need: Make yourself dead in need and poverty,

So that Jesus' breath may bring you to life and make it like itself: beautiful and auspicious.

When did stones ever become green through spring? Become dust, so that you may grow up as multicolored roses.

For years you have been heart-scratching stone—try for a time being dust! (M I 1896–99, 1909–12)

Spring and the garden are messengers from the Paradise of the Unseen—listen, since *It is only for the messenger to deliver the message* (V 99). (D 13712)

Whatever gladdens the mind is the scent of my Beloved, whatever enraptures the heart is a ray from my Friend.

Why are the earth and its creatures in such ferment? My Saki spilled a drop upon the ground.

If you see someone frozen and withered, he is in love with his own affairs—look not at your own affairs, look at mine!

At the time of spring all the earth's secrets become manifest; when my spring comes, all my spiritual mysteries blossom forth.

The earth's rosegarden hides the thorns of the earth; when my rosery springs up, it takes away all my thorny agitation.

Autumn makes a man sick, so he drinks a draught of spring; when my spring laughs, my sick man leaps to his feet.

What is this wind of autumn? The breath of your denial. What is this wind of spring? The breath of my acknowledgement. (D *1945*)

Thou hast planted the seed of the heart beneath this water and clay. It will not become a tree until it reaches Thy spring. (D 5811)

Once you have seen His Face, then roses, narcissus, willows, cypress, and lilies will grow up in your heart. (D 20148)

When the Image of my Beloved gladdens my spring, His Face scatters roses, my vision becomes a rosery. (D 10194)

What God said to the rose to make it laugh, He said to my heart and made it a hundred times more comely. (M III 4129)

Spring has come, oh friends! Arise and come to the garden! But my spring is Thou—I look at none other. (D 25675)

Oh laughing, new spring, you have come from No-place! You resemble the Friend somewhat. What have you seen of Him?

You are laughing and fresh of face, verdant and musk-scented—are you the same color as our Friend, or did you buy some of His dye?

Oh wonderful season, like the spirit you are hidden from the eye: manifest in your effects but concealed in your essence.

Oh rose, why not laugh? For you have been delivered from separation. Oh cloud, why not cry? For you have been cut off from your friend.

Oh rose, adorn the meadow and laugh for all to see! For you had to hide among thorns for months.

Oh garden, nurture well these new arrivals, the tales of whose coming you had heard from the thunder.

Oh wind, make the branches dance in remembrance of the day you wafted over union.

Behold these trees, all of them joyful like a gathering of the felicitous—oh violet, why are you bent over in heartache?

The lily says to the buds, "Though your eyes are closed, they will soon open, for you have tasted of good fortune." (D *2936*)

The red rose, which tears its cloak to shreds—I for one know its motive.

The willow has let down its branches in straight rows to make up for all the ritual prayers it has missed.

The lily with its sword and the jasmine with its shield are preparing themselves for the holy war.

The poor nightingale—how he suffers! He sighs at the rose's display.

Each of the lovely brides in the garden says, "The rose is glancing at me."

The nightingale replies, "The rose makes those amorous gestures for my sake, headless and footless me!"

The plane-tree has lifted up its hands in lamentation—shall I tell you what supplications he makes?

Who put the hat on the bud's head? Who bent the violet over double?

Although autumn was very cruel, behold the faithfulness of spring!

Whatever autumn took in pillage, spring has come and replaced.

I speak of roses, nightingales and the beauties of the garden as a pretext—why do I do it?

For the sake of Love's Jealousy—at any rate, I am describing God's graces.

The pride of Tabriz and the world, Shams al-Dīn, has again shown me favor. (D *1000*)

You must step into the plain of the heart, for no happiness can be found in the plain of clay.

Oh friends, the heart is a land of security—it is fountains and rosegardens within rosegardens! (M III 514–515)

When the clouds of Thy Love rain down their peerless pearls, a thousand beautiful forms grow up from the heart and the spirit,

Just as when rain comes down from heaven, and stream, pool, and limpid water are covered with tiny domes.

What domes!? For out of these domes come roses, violets, narcissus, and crescentlike hyacinth. (D 14319–21)

This morning my meditation took me to a garden, neither outside of this world nor within it.

I asked, "Oh garden of wonders! What garden art thou?" It answered, "One that fears neither winter nor autumn." (D 35726–27)

Flowers that grow up from green plants last but an instant, but the Intellect's flowers keep on flourishing.

Flowers that rise out of clay wither, but flowers that bloom in the heart—oh what joy! (M VI 4649–50)

Love is a rosegarden—take nourishment from it! The tree of poverty fills the inward garden with fruit. (D 11873)

The keepers of Love's garden pluck fruit from their own hearts. (D 22212)

Come into the infinite garden of the heart and behold its many sweet fruits!

See its dancing green boughs, behold the gentleness of thornless roses!

How long will you look at the form of the world's body? Return, and behold its inward mysteries! (D 11648–50)

In the verdant garden of Love, which has no end, there are many fruits besides heartache and joy.

Loverhood is beyond these two states. It is green and fresh without autumn and spring. (M I 1793–94)

G.

The Heart-Ravishing Beloved

God is the only object worthy of our love, for He is the True Beloved; every other object of love veils His Face. In describing His Image which they contemplate in their hearts, the Sufis often use terminology pertaining to the primary derivative beloved of the male human being, that is, woman. All the imagery employed by the Persian poets in the ghazal or "love poem" to praise derivative beloveds takes on a new significance at the hands of the Sufi poets.

Again one must keep in mind that this is not a question of poetical convention, since according to Sufi teachings women manifest the divine Attributes of Beauty, Mercy, Gentleness, and Kindness in a relatively direct manner within their outward forms. In Rūmī's view, their derivative beauty is the closest thing to True Beauty in the material world. For this very reason, the attraction that their beauty exerts upon a man can be one of the greatest obstacles to his spiritual development. As long as he thinks that a woman's beauty belongs to her, he will be led astray. But once he is able to see her beauty as the reflection of God's Beauty, then his derivative love can be transformed into True Love.

The accursed Iblis said to the Creator, "I want a mighty snare for this hunt."

God showed him gold, silver, and herds of horses; "You can steal away people with these."

He said, "Marvellous," and his lips dropped down morosely; he became shrivelled and sour like a lemon.

Then God gave that ill-starred satan gold and jewels from wonderful mines.

"Take these other snares, oh accursed one!" He said, "Give me more than this, oh Best of Helpers!"

He gave him sweet and rich foods, delicious drinks, and many garments of silk.

He said, "Oh Lord, I need more help than this so that I can tie them with *a rope of palm-fiber* (CXI 5).

Then those who are drunk with Thee, who are masculine and courageous, can break these bonds like men.

Through these snares and cords of self-will, Thy men will be separated from the unmanly.

I want another snare, oh Sultan of the Throne—a man-throwing snare, treacherous in deception."

God brought wine and music and placed them before him. Iblis smiled a bit and almost became happy.

Then he called out to God's eternal Attribute of "Leading Astray":[24] "Stir up dust from the depths of temptation's ocean! . . ."

So He showed him the beauty of woman, greater than the intellect and patience of men.

Iblis snapped his fingers and began to dance with glee: "Give her to me at once—I have attained to my desire!"

When he saw those languorous eyes that agitate the mind and the intellect,

Their cheeks' purity, that throws the heart's incense into the fire,

The face, the mole, the eyebrow, the carnelian lips—God Himself seemed to shine forth from behind a delicate curtain.

He saw her coquettry and subtle movements as God's theophany behind a gossamer veil. (M V 942–953, 956–961)

The richness of the symbolism and imagery of Sufi love poetry is enhanced by the fact that the Persian language makes no distinction between genders in nouns or pronouns. As a result most of the terminology employed in speaking of derivative or "profane" beloveds can be applied equally well to God. Certainly many if not most of Sufi love poems can be read as if they were addressed to a woman. In fact, without doubt a certain number of them were inspired by a woman's beautiful features, but this did not prevent the poet from viewing her loveliness as the mirror of God's Beauty.

Unfortunately, the ambiguity of the original Persian in regard to gender cannot easily be preserved in English. Like most translators, I have thought it better to remove the ambiguity rather than to employ some artifice for preserving the original flavor.[25] For the same reason, I have employed capital letters freely, whereas again no such device exists in Persian. What this means in practice is that, for example, when Rūmī speaks about the *ma'shūq* or *dilbar*, I translate this as "Beloved" and make the pronoun referring to this antecedent "He," "Him," or "His." But linguistically one could just as easily make the noun "beloved" and the pronoun "she" or "her." In any case, the very content of the verses is often ambiguous and images are employed which are unfamiliar to Western readers. This fact alone would seem to warrant my decision to take the True Beloved into account in translation and ignore the equally possible reference to the derivative beloved.

1. THE WITNESS

The word *shāhid* or "witness" is one of the more ambiguous terms of Persian love poetry because of the wide range of meanings it embraces. In one sense, it is a Name of God, equivalent to the Koranic term *shahīd*, which appears in a number of verses, such as, "God is Witness over everything" (XXII 17). In another sense *shāhid* is an attribute of the Prophet and by extension of all prophets and saints, as in the verse, "Oh Prophet! We have sent thee as a witness" (XXXIII 45), that is, a witness over the faith and deeds of men, one who will testify concerning them on the Day of Resurrection. In a similar sense it is employed to mean a "witness" or a piece of "evidence" presented before a judge. Throughout Persian literature it can also mean a beautiful woman or a beautiful boy, who are taken to be signs, mirrors, or "witnesses" of God's Beauty. Hence too it means the "object of beauty worthy of our love," that is, the beloved, whether True or derivative. It may also refer to the Image or Form of the True Beloved in the heart. In this sense it rejoins its first sense, since "None knows God but God." The temporal cannot know the Eternal, so to the extent that the Sufi contemplates God in his heart, God Himself is the contemplator: Ultimately, the Witness, the Witnesser, and the Witnessing are all one.

Certain Sufis, such as Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī and Fakhr al-Dīn 'Irāqī, seem to have made systematic use of outward objects in the world as supports for the contemplation of the inward Witness. These two figures in particular are known for meditating upon the Witness as reflected in the person of young boys, a practice for which they were often blamed by other Sufis, including Shams-i Tabrīzī himself.

When Rūmī speaks of the Witness he usually means the Witness within the heart. Sometimes he may mean the saint, who has been transformed into a locus of manifestation for God's Beauty and has become His beloved, or the object of His words, "But for thee . . .".

One should also mention the "*shāhid-bāz*," the person who is "devoted to witnesses," he who occupies himself with the contemplation of their beauty. Because of the various levels of meaning of the word "witness" in Persian literature, *shāhid-bāz* may sometimes mean "lover of boys" in a homosexual sense. More often it refers to him who is devoted to contemplating beauty in human form. In the long passage quoted below, Rūmī applies it in the latter sense to God Himself.

To the extent that Rūmī speaks of the outward physical forms of human beings as "witnesses," or manifestations of God's Beauty, he either makes no allusion to their gender or makes them female. In a similar manner Rūmī often refers to the "virgin girls" or the "brides" of the heart, that is, the Images and Forms of God's Beauty within it. Perhaps the only "witness" in this sense who takes on a masculine form is Joseph, whom Moslem sources call the most beautiful person ever created by God.

> God has certain servants who, when they see a woman in a veil, command her, "Remove your veil so that we may see your face! Who are you? What are you? When you go by covered like this and we cannot see you, we will be distracted, saying to ourself, 'Who was that? What person was that?' I am not someone who, having seen your face, will be fascinated by you and attracted to you. It is a long time now that God has made me pure and free of all of you. I am secure from the danger of seeing you and becoming distracted and fascinated. But if I do not see you, then I will be distracted by the thought, 'Who was that?'" This group contrasts with another group—the people of the ego. If they should see the faces of witnesses, they will be fascinated and distracted by them. For their sake it is better that the witnesses keep themselves veiled so that they will not become captivated by them. But as for the People of the Heart, it is better that the witnesses unveil themselves to them so that they will not be distracted.
>
> Someone said that in the city of Khwārazm no one falls in love, for in Khwārazm there are many witnesses. No sooner does someone see a witness and lose his heart to her than he sees another more beautiful, and his heart becomes cold toward the first.

The master said: Although they do not fall in love with Khwārazm's witnesses, well, they should fall in love with Khwārazm itself, for within it are an infinite number of witnesses. That "Khwārazm" is poverty: Within it are countless beauties, which are meanings and spiritual forms. Whenever you turn to one and take rest in her, another shows her face, and you forget the first—and so on *ad infinitum*. So let us become lovers of poverty itself, wherein such witnesses are to be found. (F 159/167)

If you want the witnesses of heaven to show themselves, make your heart the companion of a mirror-polishing file! (D 21565)

Make the house of your body a garden and rosery! Make the corner of your heart a Friday mosque!

Then at every instant you will contemplate a unique witness bringing a rare almond-candy on a tray. (D 32022–23)

Who is this that has come from the Wineseller so drunk? He is either the Friend, or he has come from the Friend's side,

Or he is the spirit's witness, his veil removed; or Joseph of Egypt, come from the bazaar. (D 24684–85)

Tonight we act like servants, pulling on the heart's ropes to erect a tent over the narcissus and lilies.

How long will we sing like a dove looking for the way, "*Kū kū* (Where? Where?)"? The silver-bosomed Witness is tearing this world to pieces.

Each moonlike witness has waylaid a path, each is a king of kings, each more beautiful than the next. (D 34724–26)

When the spirit's witness asked me to give witness to God, this unbelieving heart found faith, yes indeed! (D 30916)

Oh, if only you would open the door of this house for an instant, you would see that the heart of every existent thing is your intimate friend;

Jacob's eyes would become joyful through the sight of his son, the Saki of union would pour out the eternal wine.

He would show His Face and say, "I am your Witness, fear not! Think not of loss, for you have found gain!" (D 30459–61)

When the witnessed Witness adorned the world, we were delivered from witnesses and Bulgarian slave-girls. (D 15590)

Spring has come and December has gone, the time of drinking and flutes has arrived! The conjunction of cup and wine has come, the table's turn has gone!

That crafty old hag has gone, that winter and mire have gone! Spring has come and given birth to a hundred witnesses, men and women. (D 34700–01)

I will place this shattered heart before Thy Image. If It should *speak* of faithfulness, I will say, "Is this faithfulness?"

When I knock upon the door of complaint, the court of justice will open its gates—my witness will be His cheek, my evidence His narcissus eyes. (D 5856–59)

You are certainty and direct vision, so laugh at opinion and imitation! You are all contemplation, laughing at transmitted sayings and news.

In the everlasting Presence, you are the Witness and the Witnessed! You laugh at the Path, the traveler, migration, and journeying!

You have lifted up your head between annihilation and obliteration—you laugh at head, diadem, belt, and crown! (D 30442–44)

You have run many a mount into the ground and traveled round the world. Travel now in the spirit and behold men who have become all spirit!

Behold the worshipers of God's Command, drowned in His Command, with their divine gifts, their beauty, and their witness-nature. (D 24187–88)

Oh witness without imperfection, the spirit dances because of you! Oh, you have intoxicated our head—from us to you, God's peace!

Wine bubbles for your sake, the cane's sugar grows up out of you! But oh, you are sweeter than both—from us to you, God's peace!

Shams of God Tabrīzī! In perfumery you are both musk and ambergris—from us to you, God's peace! (D 24522–25)

Know that the gnostic's eye provides sanctuary for the two worlds, since every king receives aid from him.

Muhammad is the intercessor for every disgrace because his eye *did not swerve* (LIII 17) from God.

In the night—this world—where the Sun is veiled, he kept his vision on God and had hope in Him.

His eyes received collyrium from *Did We not expand thy breast?* (XCIV 1). He beheld what Gabriel could not bear. . . .

He contemplated the stations of all God's servants. Hence God named him the "Witness."

The tools of the Witness are a tongue and eyes so keen that no secret can elude his nightly vigil.

If a hundred claimants should show their heads, the Judge listens to the Witness.

Such is the practice of judges in making decisions: The witness becomes their two clear-seeing eyes.

The witness's words replace the judge's eyes, for he has seen the secret with disinterest.

The claimant has an eye, but self-interest has overcome it; self-interest is the veil of the heart's eye.

God wants you to become pious, so that you will leave aside self-interest and become a Witness,

For these self-interested motives are veils upon the eye, twisted around the vision like blindfolds. . . .

So the Prophet saw the mysteries without any veils; he saw the trajectory of the spirits of both believers and unbelievers.

God possesses nothing in the lofty heavens and in the earth more hidden than man's spirit.

God has disclosed all things, fresh and withered (cf. Koran VI 59), but He has sealed the spirit's mysteries with *from the command of my Lord* (XVII 85).

So, since the Prophet's mighty eye saw that spirit, nothing remained hidden from him.

He is the Absolute Witness in every quarrel; his words break the spell of every headache.

God's Name is "Just," and the Witness is His; so the just Witness is the Beloved's eye.

In the two worlds God gazes upon the heart, for a king gazes upon the witness.[26]

God's Love and the mystery of His "contemplation of the witness" (*shāhid-bāzī*) are the foundation of all His veilmaking.

Therefore our Contemplator of the Witness said, "But for thee" at the time of encounter on the night of the *mi'rāj*.

God's Judgment rules over good and bad, but does not the Witness rule the Judgment?

The prisoner of that Judgment became its commander! Joy to you, oh keen-sighted Prophet pleasing to God! (M VI 2860–63, 66–73, 76–86)

> Fly to the Unseen! Fly not in this direction, oh my nimble bird! Go to the Hidden House, oh my thought and comprehension!
>
> What has the world to show from the fairgrounds of the Universal Intellect other than the drum? What have the spheres acquired from the harvest of my spheres other than straw?
>
> I have wounded your heart—lay no salve on the wound I inflict! I have torn your robe—do not mend the tear!
>
> Behold me with more joy, for from head to foot, I am the Water of Life. Do not be so suspicious, oh you who fear destruction at my hands!
>
> Next to the shore of my spirit's sea, the ocean is less than a drop—next to my aspiration filled with heartache, joy is not worth a barleycorn.
>
> Kings hunt rabbits, quail, and gazelles, but look at the ferocious lions tied upside down to my saddle-straps!
>
> Lions' hearts have turned to blood, blood has colored the plain like roses. Those who drive men mad have been driven mad by me, the witness of "But for thee". (D 18897–903)

Such terms as "Witness," "Heart-ravisher," "Heart-taker," "Heart's ease," are all applied to the beautiful and ravishing Beloved and represent theophanies of His Gentleness. But sometimes the Beloved manifests Himself as Severity and Wrath, in which case He is cruel and blood-drinking. As we have seen, Rūmī is not averse to employing relatively shocking imagery. In the following passages we quote two isolated instances of the use of the term "whore" (*rūspī*). If the witness is the Beloved perceived in beautiful form, then the whore is the Beloved perceived in ugly form. In other words, whores are images perceived within the heart which at first sight increase the pain and agony of separation. But the lover must embrace them gladly, for in fact they are none other than the beautiful Witness.

> Well, I am a whoremonger. From the time I was small this has been my work. I know that this removes hindrances and burns veils. It is the root of all acts of obedience. Everything else is secondary. In the same way, unless you cut the lamb's throat, there is no use in blowing upon its trotters. Fasting takes to nonexistence, wherein, after all, every happiness is to be found. *And God is with the patient* (II 249). (F 126/137)
>
> Learn from the Prophet an alchemy: Whatever God gives you, be content.

At the very moment you become content in affliction, the door of paradise will open.

If the messenger of heartache comes to you, embrace him like a friend!

A cruelty that comes from the Beloved—bestow upon it a warm welcome!

Then that heartache can throw off its chador, rain down sugar, and be gentle and heart-ravishing.

Seize the edge of heartache's chador, for she is beautiful but deceptive.

In this lane, I am the whoremonger, I—I have pulled off the chador from every beautiful face.

They all put on ugly chadors so that you will think they are dragons.

But I am fed up with my spirit—I worship dragons! If you are fed up with your spirit, then hear their calls of welcome!

Heartache can never find me without laughter—I call the pain the "cure."

Nothing is more blessed than heartache, for its reward has no end.

If you do not show your manliness, you will find nothing. I will be silent, lest a mistake jump from my mouth. (D *2675*)

2. VISION OF THE FACE

Vision of the Beloved is the true capital of love. Before the lover catches a glimpse of Him, his work on the spiritual path will depend upon hearsay, and the fire in his heart will not blaze up. But once he is given the slightest taste of vision's ecstacy, he totally loses interest in everything other than God.

In the language of Love, the Face pertains to union, as do the spiritual favors bestowed by the kiss. But the Beloved's tresses veil His Face, and thus pertain to separation. Or rather, they are a two-edged sword. They conceal the Face, but in the last analysis they are *His* tresses. So they are a chain which, when grasped, will save from drowning in the sea of multiplicity.

a. Vision

Man is always in love with that thing he has not seen or heard or understood. Night and day he seeks it. "I am the servant of that which I do not see." But he becomes bored with what he has seen and understood, and he flees

from it. This is why the philosophers deny the vision of God. They say, "If you were to see Him, it is possible that you would become sated and bored—but that is not permissible." The Sunni theologians answer that this would only be so if He had just one color. But He displays a hundred colors at every instant, for *Every day He is upon a task* (LV 29). If He were to show Himself in a hundred thousand theophanies, none of them would ever resemble any other. After all, you also see God at this very moment, in His Effects and Acts. Every instant you see something different, for none of His Acts resembles any other. At the time of joy, there is one theophany, at the time of weeping another theophany, at the time of fear another theophany, at the time of hope another theophany. Since God's Acts and the theophanies of His Acts and Effects are different and do not resemble each other, the theophany of His Essence is the same, just like the theophany of His Acts. Judge the one from the other! And you also, who are a single particle of God's Power, every instant you undergo a thousand changes and never stay the same. (F 113–114/ 124–125)

Man is vision, the rest is skin; but only vision of the Friend is vision.

Where there is no vision of the Friend, a man would be better off blind. When your friend is not everlasting, you had better avoid him. (M I 1406–07)

Either vision of the Friend or love for Him—to what other end should a man employ this world?

If you want to see the Friend in His Image, keep your spirit in prostration! (D 1445–46)

God's aim for man was vision and comprehension—oh, God's mercy never leaves vision and comprehension! (D 10906)

When a man has reaped the fruits of vision, he sees this world as carrion. (M II 582)

It is related in tradition that a fine and expensive horse, worth the taxes of a whole province, was brought before the Prophet of God as a gift. He accepted it and said, "Had I been offered a shinbone, I would have accepted it." In other words, "My detachment makes it obvious to me that the storehouses and treasuries of the earth are nothing in relation to those of the heavens, for this earth pecks at the breadcrumbs of the heavens. I was offered those treasuries and storehouses of the heavens, yet I did not even glance at them. *His eye swerved not, nor swept astray* (LIII 17). I wonder, when someone has seen God's Countenance, what thing in his eyes

could be something? I acted thus out of detachment. But out of generous manliness, compassion, and the desire to please God's creatures, I accept and honor any gift that is brought to me, even the leg of a rabbit. I would not disappoint the giver." (MK 47: 52/113)

Is there no one with a pure and worthy vision with which to gaze upward?

If there no one purified of this water and clay so that he may gaze upon the Ocean?

So that he may place his foot upon Mount Qāf and look upon the wing of the Phoenix?

So that the Sun may make his vision drunk and headless and footless?

Is there no one who receives replenishment from Love's light so that his vision may fall totally Yonder?

Water becomes purified with water—the man who can see gains vision from Vision.

Become nothing but vision, for in God's Court, nothing finds access but vision! (D *1169*)

I saw that good and beautiful King, that Eye and Lamp of the breast,

That Intimate and Comforter of the heart, that spirit-increasing Spirit and World.

I saw Him who gives intellect to the intellect and purity to purity,

That Object of adoration for the moon and the heavens, that Kiblah of the spirits of the saints.

Each one of my particles called out with its own voice, "All praise be to God and thanksgiving!"

When Moses suddenly saw that Light from the bush,

He said, "I have been delivered from seeking! For I have been given this gift."

God said, "Oh Moses, leave aside traveling! *Throw down thy staff*! (XXVII 10)"

At once Moses cast out from his heart friends, fellows, and kin.

This is the significance of *Put off thy two shoes*! (XX 12): "Cut off thy love from the two worlds!"

The house of the heart has no room for any but God—the heart knows the jealousy of the prophets.

God said, "*Oh Moses, what is that in thy hand?*" He replied, "*That is my staff* for the road" (XX 17–18).

He said, "*Cast it down* (XX 19) and see the marvels of heaven!"

He threw it down and it became a serpent; when he saw the serpent he fled (XX 20–21).

God said, "Take it and I will make it your staff once more" (XX 21):

"I will make your enemy your assistant, your adversary your support.

Then you will know that faithful and gentle friends derive only from My Bounty.

When We give pain to your hands and feet, they become serpents in your eyes.

Oh hand, seize naught but Us! Oh foot, seek naught but the Goal!

Flee not from the suffering We inflict, for wherever you find suffering, there also you find a way to the remedy."

No one has ever fled from suffering without finding something worse in return.

Flee from the bait—that is where fear lies. Leave fear of places for the intellect.

Shams of Tabriz has shown his gentleness, but when he went away, he took it with him. (D *123*)

b. The Face

Oh Lord, if we have any ease without Thy Face, give us no ease! (D 16277)

No one becomes aware of that royal Presence until he comes home without heart and intellect.

He is mad who has seen Thy Face and then remained distant from Thee without going mad! (R 618)

One view of Him is worth more than a hundred spirits, so give your spirit, buy cheaply, and go! (D 23099)

Although the first glance was unthinking, it became the capital and basis for Love. (D 7468)

As soon as I saw the Face of that Unique Beloved, I saw my heart in infinite heartache. (D 16390)

By Thy Face, I have never seen a Face like this! How dost Thou resemble that form that I heard talk about? (D 14979)

Oh, do not drive him who has once beheld Thy Face far from Thy Face!

Seeing other than Thy Face has become a torture! Everything other than God is vain! (M VI 2897–98)

Since the idol is Thy Face, idolatry is sweeter; since the wine comes from Thy cup, drunkenness is sweeter.

I have been so naughted in Thy Love's existence that my nonexistence is a thousand times sweeter than my existence. (R 904)

Like the sun, He neither sleeps nor eats, and He deprives spirits of food and sleep:

"Come! Become Me, or have the same traits as I! Then you may see My Face in theophany!" (M VI 578–579)

When the spirit was annihilated in contemplation it said, "None but God has contemplated God's Beauty!" (D 8994)

Thy Face made me a continual rosegarden, Thy vision kept my eyes always bright.

I used to say, "May the evil eye be far from Thy Face!" Oh Beloved, could I then have been that evil eye? (R 1166)

In order that we might remember each other, I gave my wounded heart to Thee and took Thy Image.

I took the Image of Thy beautiful, moon-enslaving Face and the curve of Thy eyebrow like a crescent! (D 17092–93)

Daytime today is my turn to view the Beloved; daytime today the Greatest Sun will ascend.

Yesterday the Friend was all Severity and blood-drinking, but today He is absolute Gentleness and the nurture of the helpless.

Speak nothing of houris, moons, spirits, or peris, for none of these resemble Him—He is something else.

Whoever has seen His Face and not been destroyed is not a man—he is a block of marble. (D 4713–16)

Oh my moon, my bright candle! From the time I first saw Thy Face, wherever I sit I am joyful, wherever I go I dwell in the midst of roses.

Wherever the King's Image may be, that is a garden and place of contemplation; whatever station I enter, I am wrapped in pleasure.

Although the doors of this six-sided monastery are closed, the Moon-faced Beloved sticks His head in my window from No-place. (D 14632–34)

He who painted you all by Himself will not leave you alone in your mad desire.

In your house of in-formation—I mean your heart—He will cause two hundred beautiful companions to grow up. (R 57)

Were the paradise of Thy Face to reveal itself in theophany, neither hell nor its wretched inhabitants would remain. (D 33434)

When the theophany of God's Beauty increases, behold: atom by atom both worlds drunk like Moses.[27] (D 4208)

He who has seen Thy Face—how cold in his eyes are the treasure buried in the earth, the moon traversing the sky! (D 5851)

With Thy Face, does anyone think about gardens? With Thy Love, does anyone think about candles and lamps?

They say, "The brain gains its strength from sleep." Does the lover think about the brain? (R 619)

When a woman encounters Thee, she cuts herself off from her husband; when a man sees Thy Face, he no longer goes to his wife. (D 8119)

I swear by Thy Spirit! Be it sovereignty over the world, anything other than seeing Thy Face is but fairy tales and deception. (D 3596)

Know that any business or work other than contemplating Thy Face is unbelief in the Way and ignorance of the Truth.

As soon as Thou showed that Countenance, Thou stole away intellect and faith. In every direction, the Ḥallāj of the spirit sees another gallows.

Thou hast made the spirit mad and the heart an ocean. How could the heart look at any other beloved? (D 11541–43)

The light of the sun's face cannot do what Thy Face does; the tumult of the Resurrection cannot do what Thy Love does.

Whoever sees Thy Face will never go to a rosegarden; whoever tastes Thy lips will never talk of wine.

When Thy locks arrive, musk retracts its fragrance; when Thy radiance comes, the intellect pulls back its head. (D 8226–28)

Were a single mote of Thy Face to show itself, neither dervish cloak nor Christian belt would remain upon the earth.

When Thou showest Thy Face to anyone in the two worlds, he is consumed by fire and left with no business but Thy heartache.

If Thou shouldst throw off the veil from that beautiful Face, no trace would remain of the faces of sun and moon.

With Love's wine Thou puttest to sleep those consumed by fire—none but Thou is confidant to the mysteries. (D *657*)

Thy shining Face has become my spirit's mirror—we two were once one, my spirit and Thy Spirit.

Oh perfect, full Moon! The house of the heart is Thine! The intellect—which was once the master—has become Thy slave and doorman.

From the day of Alast the spirit has been drunk with Thee, though for a time it was distracted by water and clay.

Since the clay has now settled to the bottom, the water is clear—no more do I say, "This is mine, that is Thine."

Now the Emperor of Rūm has smashed the Ethiopians[28]—may Thy laughing good fortune be forever victorious!

Oh, Thy Face is like the moon—let me lament from time to time, for Thy eloquent love has become my veil. (D *2243*)

What didst Thou drink last night? Tell me, my sugar-sweet Idol, so that I may drink the same—day and night, all year long, for the rest of my life.

If Thou misleadest me, Thy color will tell the tale—ever since I saw Thy color, my head has been stunned.

For a time pull up Thy reins—leave me not in haste! Let my heart light up, let me gaze upon Thee to the full.

My heart is beating wildly—stay still for a moment! The blood keeps dripping from my eyes—leave not my gaze in haste!

When I am far from Thee, I teach the earth to be dark and dismal; but when I see Thee for an instant, I light up the azure heavens.

When the sun's cheek moves far from the earth's countenance, night must pull down a black cloth of separation.

But when the sun shows itself in the morning, the earth dons white garments—oh, Thy Face is the spirit's sun! Do not go far from me!

Be not a tyrant, oh Idol! Spill not my blood without cause! Close not Thy heart toward me, oh Idol, smash not my gem!

Last night the cup placed Thy Image in my hand—before I saw Thee there, I had no desire for wine.

Thou hast given the heavens and earth a potion through which they have grown fat—nurture me from Thine own Self, for I am emaciated!

Oh quarrelsome Idol, Thy quarreling has made even sugar drunk! Thy Spirit is my spirit, Thy Star my star!

I keep on telling my heart, "Drink blood and stay silent!" But it just shrugs its shoulders: "You be silent, I'm deaf." (D *1407*)

c. The Tresses

The eye that stole a glance at that Face witnessed a hundred intoxications and revelries. . . .

The ear that heard "Peace!" from the lips of that Friend will never accept the blandishments and deceptions of Time.

Since you have not seen the curls of His tresses, you have an excuse with Him, oh you who are entangled in the good and evil of Time's turning! (D 25133, 35–36)

God is present with you—*We are nearer to him than his jugular vein* (L 16)—but you are in His Tresses and unaware, like a comb. (D 24826)

Within the veils of musky hair behold the Face! Ah, what a Face! God Himself has washed it, far from all face-washers.

Nothing veils His cheek but the ends of His tresses—sometimes they are mallets, sometimes polo balls.

His Face is so radiant that lovers err and see His Form at the end of those hairs. (D 2334–36)

Many a spirit has rolled before the polo-mallet of Thy tresses! The soul of ambergris is bewildered by such musk! (D 27597)

The banner of Thy tresses veils Thy Beauty—otherwise Thy Light would shine forth, oh Thou of beautiful chin! (D 21768)

He is the shadow and the light, He is gathered and dispersed: Light reflects His Face, shadow His hair. (D 22734)

Let the Unseen Form come and remove you from form, for His twisted curls have entangled you in problems. (D 24225)

The curls of Thy tresses have disheveled and tangled my affairs—place Thy disheveled locks upon my tangled affairs! (D 25305)

Seize the skirt of the Sun with both hands: Become completely gathered from those dispersed tresses. (D 34800)

You will not reach the Idol's Face until He seizes you with the snare of His tresses—but strive, for striving will cook you! (D 9487)

For him who has the mote of a heart in his breast, living without love for Thee is difficult.

He who sees Thy chainlike tresses, ring upon ring, and then stays rational is mad. (R 581)

What should fascinate me but Thy two fascinating eyes? What should drive me mad but Thy two chainlike tresses?

Why should I spin like the heavens unless out of love for that Face of Thine, which is sought by the moon? (D 17213–14)

Ever since that night when I saw the ends of Thy tresses in a dream, I have been bewildered and distracted, but Thou hast not interpreted my dream. (D 28045)

When I passed beyond my intellect, I seized the ends of His tresses—now I am caught, captured by His curls. (D 14951)

Come, attach that chain to my foot, for I have torn apart the chain of rational connections!

If you bring two hundred chains, I will snap every one except the curls of my auspicious Beloved. (M VI 610–611)

Today the King came secretly before the madmen, and their spiritually possessed souls began to lament.

That King recognized my voice among the shouts, for it was purified from the breath of animality.

He made a royal gesture, meaning, "One of the possessed has escaped his fetters." Oh King, if I am possessed, Thou art the Solomon of all possessing spirits.

Oh King! Thou knowest the mysteries of the birds and the incantations of the jinn. How fitting if Thou shouldst also recite a spell over this madman!

An old man came before the King and said, "Bind him with chains, for this madman has caused a great deal of uproar and destruction among the devils."

My King said, "This madman can be held by no chain but My tresses—you do not know his character.

He will snap thousands of fetters and fly to Our hand. He will become *To Us they shall return* (XXI 93), for he is a royal falcon." (D *2509*)

d. The Kiss

Come! How much for a kiss from those precious rubies? If a kiss costs a life, it still must be bought.

Since that kiss is pure, it is not suited for dust—I will become a disengaged spirit, I will leave this body.

The Ocean of Purity said to me, "You will not attain your desire without payment: A precious pearl lies within you, so smash the shell!" (D 19857–59)

He is selling a kiss for a spirit! Go, buy! He is giving them away for free! (D 21187)

Oh, the work of Thy eyes is to kill the innocent! And oh, the work of Thy ruby lips is to satisfy needs! (D 19843)

I have never seen anything like Thy Image: It kisses, but it has no mouth! (D 7278)

That thieving Heart-ravisher gave me a kiss and went! What would have happened if instead of one He had given me six or seven?

Every lip He kisses bears its marks: It splits and cracks from His lips' sweetness.

Another mark is that mad desire for the lip of the Water of Life makes Love stir up a thousand fires and furnaces every instant.

Still another mark is that the body, like the heart, runs after that kiss with haste and speed.

It becomes slender and delicate like the Friend's lips—how marvellous! Slenderness from the fire of a boundless Beloved! (D *419*)

I asked for one kiss, and Thou gavest me six! Whose student wert Thou, that Thou art such a master?!

What a fine foundation Thou art for goodness and generosity! Oh, Thou bestowest a thousand freedoms upon the world! (R 1692)

3. JEALOUSY

The Arabic and Persian dictionaries define the word *ghayrat* as the "Abhorrence of the usurpation of one's rights by others." This is not far from Webster's definition of "jealousy": "Intolerance of rivalry or unfaithfulness." Either definition would be adequate to explain the Old Testament use of the word "jealous": "You shall worship no other god, for the Lord . . . is a jealous God" (Exod. 34.14).

In Arabic and Persian the close connection between the words "jealousy" (*ghayrat*) and "other" (*ghayr*) is of fundamental importance for an understanding of the nature of God's jealousy. Although the term "jealousy" is not employed in the Koran, the word "other" occurs in a number of passages which are closely connected to the concept of jealousy as understood by the Sufis. To cite but one example, the Koran declares that the message of several pre-Islamic prophets was, "Worship God! You have no god other than He" (VII 59, 65, 73, 85; XI 50, 61, 84). The similarity between this command and the Old Testament "You shall worship no other god" is self-evident.

In short, God's jealousy is closely connected to the existence of things and beings other than Himself. But here we immediately face a seeming paradox: There are no "others". What appears to be "other than God" is in fact foam upon the Ocean, forms manifesting meanings, the Hidden Treasure displaying itself outwardly, sunlight upon a wall. All multiplicity is the manifestation of Unity.

If man does see things as other than God, that is because he is not able to see them as they truly are. He must smash the cage of self-existence and see all things as the manifestation of God's Names and Attributes.

> If you remain in forms, you are an idol-worshiper. Pass beyond the form and behold the meaning! (M I 2893)
>
> If you break yourself, you will become the kernel—then you will hear the tale of a wonderful Kernel. (M V 2143)
>
> Grasp the skirt of a love full of ardor, since nothing else can deliver you from otherness. (D 32512)

"Otherness" is a veil over our eyes woven by our own imagination. Neither we ourselves nor the things we perceive outside of ourselves are truly other than God. So to say that God is "jealous" means that He abhors the fact that "others" have usurped His right to be the only Divinity. For when we see others, we are seeing multiplicity, things independent from God, "false gods." Not until we have attained the final annihilation of ourselves and subsistence in God will we cease

to be the objects of His jealousy. For then there is only He—the other has ceased to exist.

Rūmī speaks of jealousy from two basic and complementary points of view. From the first point of view, God's jealousy means that, abhorring the fact that others have usurped His right to be the only object of worship, He eliminates all others. He does this by showing His creatures that all things other than He—including their own selves—are unfaithful, inconstant, and ugly. Thus He turns people away from others toward Himself. God guides certain people in this manner until they become His lovers, and then He often makes them the object of the ridicule and blame of "others."

From the second point of view this same jealousy means that God maintains the veils over creatures' eyes, since they are unworthy of seeing Him. Those who have not eliminated all others from their own vision are not given access to Him. If a person is not willing to enter the spiritual path and undertake all the discipline that it implies, God's jealousy will not allow him to see anything but otherness. There is an obvious connection between this second point of view and the "heedlessness" that maintains the existence of the world. If God were to show His Face to "others," this would result in their annihilation, which is contrary to the divine plan for revealing the Hidden Treasure.

In short, God's jealousy manifests itself on the one hand by smashing idols or "others" and on the other by maintaining the veils which prevent "others" from gaining access to His inviolable Presence. Although these two activities appear to be opposed, in fact they are performing the single task of manifesting the Hidden Treasure by separating the different kinds of creatures and making their natures clear. For jealousy activates the principle of congenity by attracting light to light and causing darkness to remain behind the veil of its own otherness.

a. Smashing Idols

When Love dominates and shows Its anger, It makes all beautiful things ugly to the eye.

Love's jealousy makes every emerald appear as a leek—this is the meaning of *no god.*

There is no god but He is this, oh protector: The moon appears to you as a black kettle. (M IV 866–868)

When the Ocean shows Its jealousy toward secondary causes, the thirsty man abandons the waterskin like a fish. (M VI 3629)

I said, "Thou hast become sour-faced, like so-and-so." He said, "Know that I am sour for a good purpose, not out of rancor or spite.

When someone enters and says, 'It is I,' I strike him upon the head: 'This is the sanctuary of Love, you animal, not a stable!'" (D 14124–25)

Thou remainest and the wine, while we have all been annihilated—why then dost Thou hide Thy Face from Thyself?

But Thy jealousy is an ever-present and observant tutor—Thou hast killed a thousand lovers for the tutor's sake.

Every instant the tutor (*lālā*) says, "No! No! (*lā lā*)," in negation: 'Strike off the head of *no god*! Bring *but God*!" (D 2370–72)

I complained of His jealousy. He laughed and said, "Whatever blocks your way—remove it!" (D 13557)

The unique God has manifested His signs in the six directions to those with illuminated eyes.

Whatever animal or plant they behold, they contemplate the gardens of divine Beauty.

That is why He said to them, *Wheresoever you turn, there is His Face* (II 115).

If in thirst you drink water from a cup, you are looking at God in the water.

But he who is not a lover sees his own form in the water, oh possessor of insight!

Since the lover's form has been annihilated in Him, whom does he see in the water? Tell me!

Because of the Jealous God's handiwork, he sees God's Beauty in the faces of the houris, like the moon reflected in water.

His jealousy is directed toward lovers and sincere believers, not toward devils and beasts.

If the devil were to become a lover, he would win the game—he would become a Gabriel, and that devil would die. (M VI 3640–48)

Out of jealousy, Love makes the lover appear like everyone's enemy. Once It has made people reject him, he turns to It.

He who is worthy of the creatures is not worthy for Love—only the whore's soul marries a hundred husbands.

Since the lover is not suited for "others," let them all reject him—then the King of Love will make him His sitting companion.

When the creatures drive him from themselves, he cuts himself off from their company; he accustoms his outward and inward to sweet-natured Love.

But when the creatures accept him, his mind drags him in their direction and his heart turns furtively this way and that toward anyone's love.

When Love sees this It says, "My tresses have thrown a shadow, so the lover smells there the fragrance of musk and ambergris.

I will make these two scents the enemy of his mind and brain—he will have to abandon both.

Though the lover has sniffed the musk in remembrance of Me, only a beginner on the Path wanders like a child saying, 'Where? Where?'

Once he has left childhood, he will open the eye of knowledge—why should he run to and fro on the river bank looking for water?"

If you have newly become a lover, take the bitter medicine and drink it, so that Shīrīn may make you sweeter than Khusraw's honey.[29]

Perhaps Shams-i Tabrīzī will intoxicate you from beyond the two worlds and remove you from yourself! (D *742*)

b. Maintaining Veils

"Jealousy" means that He is other than all things, that He is beyond explanation and the noise of words. (M I 1713)

Marvellous jealousy that King exercises toward Himself! For He is both Sultan and keeper of the veil. (D 23084)

God's jealousy has set up a veil: It has mixed together the low and the lofty. (M VI 2615)

Oh Life of the spirit! Since Thou hast a home in this world, why does the dirt in the road not speak? Why are stones unaware?

Why does poison taste bitter? Why are thorns sharp? Why does anger display violence? Why are nights dark?

One day in the garden of His Face I kept wondering how in this world, during His reign, a thorn could be a thorn.

Has that Presence out of jealousy masked His own Face? Does He maintain His "otherness" so that "others" cannot see Him?

Or is the very eye of the world so coarse and gross and perverted that it can perceive nothing of the Gentleness of that Radiant Face? (D 27100–04)

Thou art not such that another can take a place next to Thee, but out of jealousy Thou hast bestowed marvellous titles:

Sometimes "jug," sometimes "cup," sometimes "unlawful," sometimes "forbidden"—all are Thou, for Thou art sometimes the guided and sometimes the Guide.

Through the light of Thy Exaltation Thou art a moon, through Thy Gentleness Thou art the rosegarden; but like the cypress and the lily, Thou art free from both.

But if I should say, "Oh All!" the parts would not recognize Thee, for the individual part knows nothing but individuality.

I compare Thee to the parts so that they may find desire; when they desire, Thou pullest them to felicity. (D 32485–89)

For the sake of jealousy, God taught Adam the names—the All-encompassing Whole wove the veils that are the parts.

Jealousy was directed at "others," but since there were no others, why did that Unique God show one as two?

The mouth is stuffed with mysteries from the Silent World. What prevents the eloquent from speaking?

The sugar lipped Realities have smothered our words with kiss after kiss. (D 2453–56)

From now on the nightingale in the garden will sing our song: He will tell of sugar-dispensing, spirit increasing Love.

If he knows the color of our Friend's Face, why does he speak of tulips, nasturtiums, and roses?

He speaks so out of jealousy and in order to cover up—he makes no mention of the head and origin and speaks about the feet. (D 9957–59)

Love is the substance of every beautiful Image, but God's jealousy makes form the veil of the spirit. (D 10680)

Your imagination is jealousy's nightstick protecting the environs of Beauty's mansion.

It has blocked every seeker saying, "There is no access!" Every image that comes to him says, "Stop!" (M V 367–368)

Where it not for that Sun's jealousy, every single dustmote would be a saki. (D 34046)

Thou art hidden because of Thy jealousy—otherwise Thou art a manifest sun, for Thou appearest in every dustmote. (D 29940)

His jealousy has a hundred hidden clemencies—otherwise it would burn away a hundred worlds in an instant. (M IV 2651)

I advise my disciples that when brides of meaning show their faces to you within yourselves, and when the mysteries are unveiled to you, beware! Beware, lest you speak of them to "others"! Do not describe them! And do not tell the words that you hear from me to everyone. As the Prophet said, "Impart no wisdom to the unworthy, or you do it injustice; and withhold none from the worthy, or you do them injustice." Imagine that you should gain a witness or a beloved and she conceals herself within your house, saying, "Display me to no one, for I belong to you!" Would it ever be fitting and permissible to take her about the bazaars and say to everyone, "Come, behold this beautiful woman!"? That beloved would never be pleased for this to happen to her, and indeed, she would become angry with you. (F 70/81–82)

Were it not for the jealousy of His rose-like Face, I would be the nightingale of every garden and rosery. (D 33961)

Out of desire for His Image I have become like a wraith, and out of jealousy toward His Name, I mention the name of the moon. (D 14868)

I am so sweet, I sit sour-faced; I am so full of words, I sit silent,

So that a sour veil may conceal my sweetness from the two worlds.

I do not want everyone to hear these words, so of a hundred mysteries from His Presence, I tell but one. (M I 1760–62)

I said, "If I become sour, I do so out of jealousy, so that the evil eye may not reach the glory and splendor of my friendship with Thee."

He said, "Forget the evil eye! It consumes but water and clay. How can possessors of the evil eye reach My Magnificence?" (D 19156–57)

Become not bored with me, for I am a truly beautiful witness! Jealousy has hidden me in a chador.

On the day when I throw the chador of the body off the spirit, you will see that I am the envy of the moon and the stars.

Wash your face and purify yourself so that you may see me! Otherwise stay far away, for I am my own witness!

I am not that witness who will become an old crone tomorrow—I will be young, heart-refreshing, and beautifully statured until Eternity-without-end.

Even if that chador should wear out, the witness will not become old; the chador's life will come to an end, but we are endless life.

When Iblis saw Adam's chador, he rejected him. Adam called to him, "You are rejected, not I."

The rest of the angels prostrated themselves and said, "We have found a witness!

Under the chador is an idol whose attributes have confounded our intellects, so we have prostrated ourselves!

If our intellects cannot discern the shapes of stinking hags from those of witnesses, then we are apostates in Love.

What place is this for 'Witnesses'? He is God's lion—we spoke like children, for we are speaking to children just learning the alphabet.

Children are deceived by walnuts and raisins—otherwise, what have we to do with almonds and sesame seeds?

If an old crone should hide herself in helmet and armor and say, 'I am Rustam in God's battlelines,'

Everyone will know from her movements that she is a woman. How should we make mistakes? We are bathed in Muḥammad's light!"

The Prophet said, "The believer is discerning"—now be silent! For without speech, I am rightly guided.

Listen to the rest from Shams, the pride of Tabriz, for we have related but part of the story from that king. (D *1705*)

H.

Winedrinking and Revelry

One of the favorite images of all Sufi poetry for describing the joys and ecstacies of union is that of winedrinking and its resultant intoxication. If the exoteric doctors sometimes accused the Sufis of transgressing God's Law, they were likely to cite the example of winedrinking, which the Sufis were constantly praising in the poetry they recited. But again Rūmī explains the meaning of his imagery in such explicit terms that little room is left for misinterpretation.

1. WINE

Wine is "that which intoxicates," so there are several kinds. Besides the kind made from grapes there are also sensuality, which brings about blindness and removes him who drinks it from God's favor; and Love, which tears away the veils separating man from God and brings about union. Rūmī devotes much of the *Dīwān* and a significant portion of the *Mathnawī* to praising the third kind and encouraging its consumption.

God has given a draught of wine the power to deliver the drunkard from the two worlds.
He has placed a virtue in hashish so that it releases a man from his selfhood for a time.
He has made sleep such that it erases all thought of the two worlds. . . .
He has hundreds of thousands of such wines that He assigns to your perceptions.

The inauspicious ego has wines of wretchedness that take it far from the Way.

The intellect has wines of felicity that lead it to the everlasting abode. . . .

Hark, oh heart! Be not deceived by every intoxication! Jesus is drunk with God, but his ass is drunk with barley. (M IV 2683–85, 87–89, 91)

Know that every sensual desire is like wine and hashish—it veils the intelligence and stupefies rationality.

Wine is not the only intoxicant of intelligence: Whatever is sensual shuts the eyes and ears.

Iblis was far from being a wine-drinker—pride and denial made him drunk. (M IV 3612–14)

Although those drunk with God are thousands, they are one; those drunk with self-will are all twos and threes. (D 3603)

Like me, cut yourself off from sensuality's intoxication—behold its drunkenness in a camel!

Know that in this world the drunkenness of sensuality is despicable compared to the angels' intoxication.

Their intoxication dwarfs this intoxication—how should they pay any regard to sensuality?

Until you have drunk fresh water, briny water is as sweet to you as light in the eyes.

A single drop of heaven's wine will tear your spirit away from all these wines and sakis. (M III 819–823)

Hallo, you who drank wine this morning, to your health! Hallo, come forward! Let me whisper some secret words in your ear:

The wine of the spirit is rare, so go, taste some of that as well! One drop will take away all your cleverness and awareness.

When you escape from this awareness through constant drinking and intoxication, the Wine-seller's generosity will give you a hundred other awarenesses.

When you enter into the mysteries, the spirit will give you to drink. Your shouting and uproar will throw the spheres into tumult.

Take this other wine, not that red or amber one. This one will make you the master of meaning and deliver you from outward forms! (D 4273–77)

Were no more grapes to grow up from the earth, know that Love's drunkenness would still be in effect.

Were the glassblower to make no more cups, know that the cups of Love's wine would still come to hand. (D 12341–42)

His wine is not made from juice, nor His cup from glass—His sweets are not made from sugar and almonds, like those of the stingy. (D 32555)

Show Thy Face to us! Conceal it not, oh Thou who like the moon art famous throughout the seven heavens!

We are a group of lovers whom desire has brought from a distant place on a journey—

Oh Thou who hast within Thine own Spirit hundreds of thousands of paradises and houris and palaces!

Look down from the roof and behold with kindliness this congregation of afflicted lovers!

Oh Saki of the Sufis! Give us a wine that does not come from vat or grapes!

Give that wine whose ferment's fragrance pulls the dead out of their graves! (D *1160*)

Oh Saki of the spirit! Fill that ancient cup, that brigand of the heart, that ambusher of religion!

Fill it with the wine that springs from the heart and mixes with the spirit, the wine whose ferment intoxicates the God-seeing eye.

That grape wine is for Jesus' community—but this Hallajian wine belongs to the community of the Koran.

There are vats of that wine and vats of this. Until you break the first, you will never taste of the second!

That wine removes heartache from the heart for but an instant—it can never extinguish heartache, it can never uproot malice. (D 929–933)

Two thousand vats of wine are not equal to a drop of Thy wine! What is the wine of dust compared to the wine of the spirit?!

This world's wine and sweetmeats, like the world, have no faithfulness; but God's wine and cup, like God, are eternal. (D 30096–97)

Muḥammad opened the door to the Unseen winecellar—a great stagnation overcame the market for pure wine. (D 6740)

God's wine is lawful many times over; the wine of God's vat is not forbidden. (D 15804)

The vulgar drink wine from outside, but the gnostics drink it from inside. The mouth's odor tells the tale, so do not tell us with the tongue! (D 19204)

Silence! And do not mention the name of wine before the unripe man, for his mind turns to the wine that is disgraced. (D 9062)

a. The Cup

The "cup" may be an allusion to the wine itself, or to its receptacle: the lover's body, spirit, or existence.

This is not the outward wine and the outward cup. Do not imagine such things about the shaykh who beholds the Unseen!

You fool, the wine's cup is the shaykh's existence, within which Satan's urine cannot be contained.

He is overflowing with God's light—he has broken the cup of the body, he is Absolute Light. (M II 3408–10)

If my cup breaks, I will not drink sorrow, for the Saki has another cup up His sleeve.

The earthly body is the cup, the spirit the pure wine. He will give me another cup, for the one I have is defective. (D 6320–21)

I have devoted the cup of my head to the wine of the spirit, so that I may be a companion of Sarī, Shiblī, and Dhu'l-Nūn.[30] (D 17225)

Oh hidden goblet! Are you the cup or the spirit? The Water of Life? Health for the afflicted? (D 27545)

Take away this ephemeral toy of a goblet! Bring me a goblet worthy of a man! (D 12360)

b. The Saki

The saki or cupbearer is Love or the Beloved, or the Form of the Beloved seen in the heart; sometimes it may allude to the saint, who is the outward and human form of Love. Rūmī often refers to Koranic verses which speak of the wines of Paradise and of God as "He who gives to drink" (*saqā*, i.e., the saki). The verse he quotes most often is "Their Lord shall give them to drink a pure draught" (LXXVI 21).

Love makes the wine of spiritual realization boil—Love is the sincere believer's hidden saki. (M III 4742)

We are fish and our Saki is none but the Ocean of Love—will the Ocean lose if we drink more or less? (D 16716)

Thou art the wine and I am the jug, Thou art the water and I am the streambed. I am drunk in the lane, oh my Saki, oh my Water-giver! (D 19174)

Oh spiritual Saki, bring the spiritual wine! Thou art the Water of Life and we all have insatiable thirst! (D 35649)

All of Love's necessities are here, but there is no revelry without Him.

Any wine whose saki is not the Friend does naught but increase sickness and nausea. (D 10457–58)

When God pours the eternal wine, a man drinks His wine like a *man*.

The wine and cup of the Creator nurture the spirit with *He shall give them to drink*. (D 12362–63)

Their Lord shall give them to drink is a tremendous cup—give it to me in concealment from both believer and unbeliever! (D 24737)

If you want *Their Lord shall give them to drink* to be addressed to you, be thirsty! And God knows best the right course. (M III 3219)

c. The Ruins

The "Ruins" (*kharābāt*) or the "tavern" (*may-khānah*) are places where men go to drink wine far from society. They are the annihilation of self-existence, the place of subsistence within the Saki.

Since Thou hast consecrated me for Thy Ruins, Thou hast ruined me—yet Thou art my builder. (D 12171)

Give that spiritual wine from the Ruins, that is, the meanings, for I have no worth except through that wine which is given to me. (D 16850)

Since you have not left this world for the Ruins of the spirit, then drink a tasteless stew instead of wine! (D 32021)

My breast has become the world's tavern—a hundred blessings upon my chivalrous breast! (D 18023)

One day you will see me sprawled in the tavern; my turban will be pawned and I will be weary of prayer carpet.

I will be drunk, my Companion will be drunk, and His sweet tresses will be in my hands—oh what a marvellous Witness! Oh what marvellous wine! (D 24626–27)

I am the slave of the people of Thy Ruins: Do not turn my back toward the Ruins! (D 21354)

What do you know of the Ruins? For they exist outside of the six directions. The Ruins are eternal, but you have just now come. (D 19546)

In this low place I was Love's companion in revelry and drunkenness. I said, "Who art thou?" It said, "The Sultan of the Ruins." (D 15289)

d. The Drinking Companions

The Ruins are inhabited by the unsavory types usually associated with such localities, such as the "profligates" (*rindān*), the "scoundrels" (*qallāshān*), the "troublemakers" (*awbāsh*), and of course the Kalanders and Sufis.

We are the profligates, sitting in the corner of the Ruins of annihilation—oh sir, what business have we with trappings, warehouses, and goods? (D 11310)

Enter the circle of the profligates, for that is the best course! Behold the uncounted wines, witnesses, and sakis! (D 12121)

Last night my heart became drunk with the face of a beloved and, well, I broke a cup before a King.

I am drunk with the face of the Moon! I am happy with my sin! I have sinned before the King, so now break my hand!

I am an utter profligate and scoundrel, I am brazen in the Religion of Love—what property have I that I should send as a gift? (D 17683–85)

As soon as I saw His cup, I became the chief of the troublemakers—as soon as I saw His hat, I lost my heart and turban. (D 14735)

If you are a profligate and a scoundrel, do justice to troublemaking! If you are beautiful and fair, why do you remain behind the veil? (D 26408)

If you are an utter profligate, then flee from fools! Open the eye of your heart to the Eternal Light! (D 32975)

Oh heart, go not to the Ruins, though you be the world's greatest Kalander!

For there they gamble away all that they are. I fear that you will not play everything and remain behind.

And if you go, go not with yourself! Put on the trace of Tracelessness! (D 29046–48)

e. The Dregs

If there is a negative side to wine, it is to be found in its "dregs" (*durd*), which are contrasted with wine that is "pure" (*ṣāfī*). The dregs are an allusion to separation from God and to the pain (*dard*) and heartache that accompany Love. True lovers, of course, "drink down the dregs" along with the pure, since they accept with joy whatever the Beloved gives them.

Why do you not become disgusted with the dregs, which are heartache and thought? What has happened to the beauty of the Beloved and the Magian wine? (D 5229)

Go to the desert of nonexistence, go to the Garden of Iram![31] You will not find wine without dregs in the cycle of Time. (D 25091)

Suppose you have drunk down all the world's pure wine—I looked for something equal to the dregs, I mean the pain of religion, but I found none. (D 4483)

Oh Saki, pour those pain-inflicting dregs upon the pure saints, and drink purified and sorrow-free wine with the Sufis. (D 1545)

When will the dust under the Idol be mixed with our blood? How sweet for these bodies to be mixed with spirits!

How sweet for these oysters of our hearts, with their terrible pain of separation, to be mixed with the pure and faithful pearls!

How sweet for day and night to sit together, for water and fire to be companions, for Severity and Gentleness to be married, for the dregs to be mixed with the pure,

For union and separation to make peace, for faith and unbelief to become one, and for the fragrance of union with our King to be mixed with the east wind! (D 25058–61)

Though the Saki of the spirit poured dregs into the cup last night, the dregs our Saki pours are all purity within purity! (D 5003)

Give the dregs, but let not the intellect discern the dregs from the pure! (D 29448)

Even though He has made me the saki of the drunkards, I am a cup for the dregs, which are His sweet pain. (D 17577)

2. INTOXICATION AND SOBRIETY

People drink wine because it brings intoxication (*mastī, sukr*). Sobriety (*hushyārī, ṣaḥw*), from which the Sufi desires to escape, is self-existence with all its concomitants. Intoxication is the obliteration of self-awareness and of the thoughts and motives connected to the ego; ultimately it is annihilation in God.

We have already seen that in a certain respect Love is opposed to the intellect. In a similar way intoxication results from the domination of Love, while sobriety results from the predominance of intellect. As was the case with the opposition between Love and intellect, here also intellect is only negated because its continued affirmation prevents the lover from gaining access to the Universal Intellect and what lies beyond. We should also recall the relationship between Love, union, and the divine Attribute of Gentleness, all of which come to the forefront in intoxication.

> Remove the straw of the body from the cup of pure wine! Lift it out, so that we may embrace good fortune,
>
> So that our eyes may pass beyond the veils and be delivered from house and furnishings and roof and door. (D 11821–22)
>
> Pour the ancient wine upon the lovers' heads! Draw a new Form in the drunkards' hearts! (D 12359)
>
> Give wine, oh Saki of these latter days! Oh Thou who hast stolen away the intellects of men!
>
> This wine has taken earthly creatures to the spheres. Oh wine, thou art the ladder of heaven!
>
> Break down the door of heartache's prison with wine! Deliver the spirit from the jail of sorrows! (D 21220–22)
>
> The heart is tied in a hundred kinds of knots, and nothing loosens knots but the wine of the spirit. (D 29438)
>
> Oh you whose heart is an ocean, drink one cup! Then your human substance will be able to make itself manifest. (D 33476)
>
> He gave me the wine of gnosis. Let me describe it for you: bitter and satisfying and delicious, like the faithfulness in my heart. (D 19054)
>
> Oh contented and joyful Saki! Bring the wine at once,
>
> So that we may drink happily and sleep happily in the shadow of eternal Gentleness. (D 28976–77)
>
> Sometimes I compare His Gentleness to wine and sometimes to witnesses, but neither of these can be contained in God's Unity. (D 27683)

When I mention the name of wine I mean Thee and Thy fire; when I lament, Thou art in the midst of my cries. (D 32484)

Thou art the wine, so winedrinking is mandatory! Thou art the idol, so idol worship is mandatory! (D 28397)

Reach for the cup and make us all drunk, for no one has become happy unless hidden from himself.

When you have been concealed from yourself, quickly flee the world! Do not turn your face back toward yourself—beware! Beware! (D 21761–62)

Always be drunk, and come not toward yourself—when you come toward yourself, you are shackled. (D 36337)

God said, "Oh spirit who has fled from affliction, We have opened the door to union with Us—welcome!

Oh you whose selflessness and intoxication are Our Self, oh you whose existence derives constantly from Ours!

Now I will tell you without speech and with constant renewal the ancient mysteries: Listen!" (M III 4682–84)

Oh Saki, when Thou wert dripping wine upon our earth, why wert Thou dripping it if Thou didst not want us mad?

Oh Saki, where is the Gentleness of the day when Thou wert the Sun pouring down light and making dustmotes dance?

Thou placest Thy finger to Thy lips: "Silence!" I submit, but the drops Thou poured for us will speak. . . .

With the first drop that fell to the earth, Adam received a spirit; when Thou poured a drop upon the heavens, Gabriel was born.

Thou wert choosing the sincere believers until Mercy became drunk—then Thou poured liberally upon the worthy and the unworthy! (D 29556–58, 60–61)

God has a wine, a hidden wine, one of whose drops became you and the world.

The second time, the second time He lets a drop fall, you will be delivered from this world, the next world, and yourself. (D 6639–40)

When you become totally naughted in the wine, at that moment you will have perfect existence.

You will be made everlasting by *He gave to drink*—without death, without annihilation, without removal. (D 28980–01)

Tonight, take my spirit totally from my body, so that I may no longer have shape and name in the world!

At this moment I am drunk in Thee—give me another cup! Then I may be obliterated from the two worlds in Thee, and be done with it.

When I have been annihilated through Thee and become what Thou knowest, then I will take the cup of nonexistence and drink it, cup after cup.

When the spirit becomes radiant through Thee, when the candle lights up—if not consumed by Thee it is raw, raw.

Give me now the wine of nonexistence instant by instant; when I have entered nonexistence, I will not know the house from its roof.

When your nonexistence increases, the spirit will prostrate itself to you a hundred times—oh you to whose nonexistence thousands of existences are slave!

Give me wine, measure by measure! Deliver me from my own existence! Wine is Thy special grace, intellect Thy general grace.

Send up waves from nonexistence to steal me away! How long will I pace the Ocean's shore in fear?

The snare of my king Shams al-Dīn is catching prey in Tabriz, but I have no fear of the snare, for I am within it. (D *1716*)

God! God! Ask not the attributes of wine from the self-existent! Behold its all-encompassing Gentleness in the eyes of the drunk! (D 23311)

How could a sober man know the drunkards' intoxication? How could Abū Jahl know the spiritual states of Muḥammad's Companions? (D 906)

Since Thou art the Saki, "unbelief" is to remain sober. That night when Thou art the moon, sleep is forbidden! (D 19915)

Oh Possessor of Bounty! Whoever drinks from Thy cup is delivered from sobriety and penalties for all eternity.

Their intoxication is that they have been annihilated forever—whoever is annihilated in Thy love will never again rise up. (M V 4204–05)

Listen to my words: Drink the wine of the spirit! Make your sober mind selfless and drunk! (D 2280)

The form of intellect is all stricture of the heart, but the form of Love is nothing but drunkenness. (D 33781)

Oh intellect! You make me existent! Oh Love! You make me drunk! Although you make me despicable, you pull me to the All-High Lord. (D 35822)

Pour for me the unmixed, royal wine! Put my many talented intellect to sleep! (D 1150)

Were a single drop of this intoxication to fall upon the intellects of all the world's inhabitants, neither the world nor man, neither compulsion nor free will, would remain. (D 35076)

First give that cup to the talkative ego so that its rational faculty will tell no more tales.

Once rationality is blocked, a torrent will come and erase all signs of this world and place. (D 24716–17)

Yesterday intellect went out with a cane in its hand and entered the circle of profligates: "How long will you work this corruption?"

When our Saki poured on its head a cup of wine, it broke down the door of the ascetic's cell: "How much more of this worship?"

It threw away its rosary and abandoned hypocrisy: "Now is the time for joy! How much more of this senseless heartache?" (D 27775–77)

Oh sir, I used to have a thousand intellects and good manners. Now that I am drunk and ruined, bad manners are welcome! (D 32431)

Man in his heartache resembles a target for arrows—he has no armor but intoxication and selflessness. (D 21898)

Oh Saki, we have raised a commotion and gone to war! Pour that rose-colored wine, so that all may become one color!

In the two worlds, Thy Form manifests the Gentleness of *God gave to drink*. Show Thy wine-colored Face, so that all may be stupefied!

When we become wine in attribute, wine will be abolished! When we become totally hashish, hashish will be overthrown!

Look! Thought and heartache have taken a home next door to us. Give wine, so that we may move two leagues away!

Oh minstrel, for God's sake play a song of drunkenness, so that thy song may tune us like a harp.

It is the banquet of the Emperor of Rūm—so polish our hearts, that we may become rustless like the mirror of the spirit!

A whole world is heart-constricted, but we are so expansive in joy, that just for once we desire to be heart-constricted!

Who has ever seen such an enemy of intellect? By mixing with it, we become all intellect, knowledge, and art!

When Shams-i Tabrīzī shows his face in the garden of purity, let us all quickly grasp him by the neck of his love. (D *1648*)

Give lots of wine, oh Saki, so that our hopes and fears may disappear! Lop off the head of thought—what have we to do with thought?

Begin the toasts! Uproot sobriety! Deliver unveiled pleasure from the chains of existence! (D 420–421)

Oh Love, bring wine for the spirits of Thy children! Obliterate thoughts with that firelike wine! (D 11254)

When the Saki reduces my ration of wine for an instant, I grab His skirt in pitiful lamentation.

Like a goblet I weep blood before Him; I boil like wine in my unsteadiness:

"I am fed up with thinking, give me wine! How long wilt Thou entrust me to thought?" (D 34168–70)

Our heart is like a bird's heart: free of thought. For we have all become light-hearted from that heavy cup! (D 25150)

The cup of their God annihilates the spirits: It delivers them from thought and war and strife. (D 35680)

Oh heartache, go, go! You have no business with the drunkards. Wound any sober man you can find.

The drunkards are safe from thoughts and heartache—make sorrowful him who is not safe!

Oh spirit drunk at the banquet of *Surely the pious shall drink* (LXXVI 5), laugh in the beard of clever cats imprisoned by self-will! (D 21555–57)

These drunkards are not under their own control—they have no fortress but God's protection. (D 11702)

Listen to the words of Sanā'ī from behind the veil: "Lay down your head right where you drank the wine!"

When a drunk strays from the tavern, he becomes the mockery and plaything of children.

He falls in the mud on this and that side of the road and every fool laughs at him.

He continues on like this, and children follow behind, unaware of intoxication and the taste of wine.

Mankind are all children except him who is drunk with God. No one has reached maturity except him who has been freed from self-will. (M I 3426–30)

Man's sober-mindedness and intellect derive from his coldness—when wine has made him warm, where are intellect and discernment?

Of course in the lack of sober-mindedness he has another kind of intelligence—how can sober-minded wakefulness be compared with the dreams of sleep?

As long as the bird is caged it suffers strictures. When the cage has been broken, what happens then?

When the intellect is present, the ego is full of faults because of sin, but when the Intellect of intellect is present, where are the sins of the ego? (D 23415–18)

It is a day of revelry, a year of joy, for today Thou hast happened by our lane!

The darkness of heartache lifted when Thou placed Thy candle in the midst.

How can thought and heartache stand up to the cup of faithfulness that Thou hast poured?

Oh wine, from which skin did you come? Oh moon, which month gave birth to you?

You are drunk, joyful, and happy, you are the heart's sultan and shah.

And the intellect that was heartache's magistrate—you took it away from us with such mastery!

Joy to you, for you have tied the feet of heartache and opened the door to a hundred kinds of joy! (D *2744*)

3. WINESICKNESS

Sobriety or sober-mindedness is the state of those still imprisoned by their own selfhood. But once the traveler has advanced to the station where he undergoes alternating states of union and separation, his separation is often referred to as "winesickness" (*khumār*). This is the state of illness and nausea experienced by the alcoholic or drug addict who becomes separated from the source of his addiction and can think of nothing but finding more of it. It is the pain, longing, grief, and heartache of separation after the taste of union.

Every sensual desire in the world, whether property, position, or bread,

Can make you drunk. Then when you do not find it, you become winesick.

This winesickness—which is heartache—is proof that you were drunk with your desire. (M III 2257–59)

If Thou takest back the wine of Thy lips from the rosegarden for a moment, every jasmine (*saman*) will weigh three maunds (*sah man*) from winesickness and heavy-headedness. (D 20576)

Though December's cruelty pulls the garden toward winesickness, spring's gentleness will break its suffering. (D 5929)

That Saki of the spirit has not come! My winesickness has not received its remedy! (D 7453)

Although He appears sour-faced because of your heartache, listen to the good news: If you are night, morning is here! If you are winesick, wine has come! (D 14359)

Give me wine early, oh generous Saki! Last night I slept not at all because of thirst and winesickness.

Make sweet the lips that mention Thy Name—my head is winesick for Thee, scratch it with drunkenness! (D 12164–65)

Love asked me, "Oh sir, what do you desire?" What does a winesick head desire but the door of the wine-seller? (D 10896)

Without Thy wine-selling lips, how can the heart's winesickness be broken? Without the arch of Thy curving eyebrow, the spirit's work cannot be straightened. (D 19262)

Oh Idol, bring wine and take away the drunkards' winesickness! Love for Thy Face has made them completely unsteady. (D 20968)

Last night, after I had waited long and was winesick, the Beloved's Image came—Oh Lord, what was it like! Oh Lord! (D 21838)

We are all winesick for His Face, thirsty for the flagon of subsistence. So pawn your turbans and cloaks with the Saki! (D 24260)

Rise up, for we have been delivered and have broken the chains! Rise up, for we are drunk, free of winesickness for all eternity! (D 11855)

We are secure from the winesickness of death, for we drink the eternal wine, free of winesickness. (D 18477)

O Thou who cut off my sleep, went into a corner, and sat down!

Thou entered my heart like a moon—but when the heart looked at Thee, Thou wert gone.
Since Thou displayed the garden of Nonexistence, how should we have patience with existence?
When a spirit has found union and intoxication, what will be its state in separation's winesickness?
How could that house remain standing whose pillar Thou hast broken down through separation?
Oh drunken brain, you thought you had escaped from the suffering of winesickness!
But in Love, there are union and separation—on the road, there are ups and downs.
Though you know God in one respect, in ten respects you worship water and clay!
You still must travel a long journey before you reach the place you seek in your madness. (D *2742*)

4. THE *SAMĀʿ*

No drinking party would be complete without music. The word *samāʿ* means literally "audition" and alludes to sessions of listening to music. Although in general the Divine Law frowns upon music, the doctors of the Law could not come to an agreement on its being forbidden. Many of them held that listening to music was like fanning a fire. A person's substance, whatever it might be, would be strengthened by music. Hence music is permissible to those of good substance. In any case, many Sufi groups listened to music in their gatherings, and often they would dance along with it. Rūmī and others even employed the dance as a means of training disciples, since it can aid in the concentration of the mental faculties and the removal of distractions.

In Rūmī's poetry *samāʿ* refers to listening to music, usually with the implication that dancing is also involved. He also refers explicitly to dancing by other terms (*raqṣ, pā kūftan*). But as in the case with all of the images he employs, music and dancing are primarily inward states, and only secondarily phenomena in the outward world. In the *samāʿ* the minstrel (*muṭrib*) plays a role analogous to that of the saki in winedrinking.

Like ardent lovers, he discerned in the sound of the rebeck the image of God's call to man.
The lament of the clarion and the threat of the drum bear a faint resemblance to that universal trumpet.
That is why philosophers say that these melodies are derived from the turning of the spheres.

What people sing with bandore and voice is the sound of the heavens' revolution.

The believers say that the effects of paradise will make every ugly voice beautiful.

We were all part of Adam and heard those melodies in paradise.

Though water and clay have covered us with doubt, we still remember something of those sounds.

But since they are mixed with the dust of sorrows, how should these high and low notes produce that joy? . . .

Hence *samāʿ* is the food of the lovers, for within it they find the Image of the meeting with the Beloved.

Sounds and songs strengthen the images within the mind, or rather, turn them into Forms. (M IV 731–738, 42–43)

Kings play polo in the field to show the inhabitants of the city—those who are not able to participate in battle and warfare—something of the combat of warriors: the lopping off of the heads of the enemies and their rolling about just as balls roll about in the polo field; and their pursuit and their attack and retreat. This game in the fields is like an astrolabe for the serious business of fighting. In a similar way the People of God perform the ritual prayers and the *samāʿ* to display what they are doing within their inmost consciousness. They show the viewers how they follow God's commands and prohibitions given especially to them. The singer in the *samāʿ* is like the imam in the prayer: The participants follow him. If he sings slowly, they dance slowly; and if he sings quickly, they dance quickly. This is a likeness of how they follow Him who gives them commands and prohibitions inwardly. (F 136–137/146–147)

What is the *samāʿ*? A message from those hidden within the heart. The heart—the stranger—finds peace in their missive.

It is a wind which causes the branches of the intellect to blossom, a sound which opens the pores of existence.

The call of the spiritual rooster brings Dawn, the sound of Mars' drum brings Victory.

The wine of the spirit kept shooting arrows into the vat of the body—when the body heard the tambourine, it began to ferment, showing its preparedness.

A marvellous sweetness has appeared in the body, for the flute and the minstrel's lips give it all the sugar it wants.

Behold now a thousand scorpions of heartache killed, a thousand sessions of joy without a single cup! (D 18177–82)

In our battle-lines we hold up no shield before our faces—in our *samā'* we are unaware of flute and tambourine! (D 31222)

The *samā'* has become a window towards Thy rosegarden; the ears and hearts of the lovers peer through the window.

We sigh, for this window has become a tremendous veil—but no! For this is a sweet veil—say nothing, oh pure man. (D 25392–93)

It is a day of joy. Come, let us all be friends! Let us take each other by the hand and go to the Beloved.

When we become stupefied in Him and are all one color, let us keep going, dancing, toward the bazaar.

It is a day for all the beauties to dance—let us close down our shops and all be idle.

It is a day for the spirits to wear robes of honor—let us go as God's guests to the mysteries.

It is a day when idols are setting up tents in the garden—let us go to the rosegarden and gaze upon them! (D *1647*)

Oh, without Thee the wine has turned to dregs! Oh, without Thee the *samā'* has congealed! (D 24838)

Bring the cup from early morning like the sun, for it has taught every mote of me to dance. (D 32537)

Today there are *samā'*, wine, and cup; a drunken Saki, a congregation of libertines—

That kind of libertine who comes from the other side of existence, not the dizzy, hashish-eating buffoon of a libertine! (D 27975–76)

Dance where you can break your own self and pluck out the cotton from the wound of sensuality!

People dance and frolic in the square—men dance in their own blood.

When they have been delivered from their own hands, they clap their hands; when they have jumped outside of their own imperfection, they dance.

Within themselves their minstrels play the tambourine; their uproar makes the oceans clap their waves.

You do not see, but they can hear the leaves on the trees also clapping.

You cannot perceive the clapping of the leaves—you need the ear of the heart, not the body's ear. (M III 95–100)

The heavens are like a dancing dervish-cloak, but the Sufi is hidden. Oh Moslems, who has ever seen a cloak dance without a body within it?

The cloak dances because of the body, the body because of the spirit, and love for the Beloved has tied the spirit's neck to the end of a string. (D 20379–80)

At the time of *samā'*, the Sufis hear another sound, from God's Throne.

You go ahead and listen to the form of the *samā'*; they have another ear. (D 11163–64)

The *samā'* of my ear is Thy Name, the *samā'* of my intelligence Thy cup. So build me anew, for by Thy Spirit, I am ruined! (D 22894)

When you have left clay, you will quickly enter the garden of the heart. Then on that side, what is there but *samā'* and pure wine? (D 23390)

When you come into the *samā'*, you are outside of the two worlds. The world of *samā'* is outside of this world and that.

Although the roof of the seventh heaven is high, the ladder of *samā'* passes beyond the roof.

Dance everything other than Him under your feet! The *samā'* belongs to you and you belong to it! (D 13685–87)

No one dances until he sees Thy Gentleness—Thy Gentleness makes infants dance in the womb.

What is so special about dancing in the womb or in nonexistence? Thy Light makes bones dance in the grave!

We have danced much over the veils of this world—become nimble, oh friends, for the sake of the dance of that other world! (D 2061–63)

The believers are dancing and clapping their hands in the bottom of the grave; they are drunk in the banquet of No-place, having quaffed the wine of faith. (D 26386)

Thy Love began its minstrelry, and day and night I am sometimes harp and sometimes flute.

Day and night Thou strikest the plectrum, and my high notes and lamentation go up to the heavens. (D 3293–94)

Someone said, "*Samā*‘ diminishes dignity and respect"—you can have the dignity, for my good fortune and dignity are His love.

I do not want intellect and wisdom—knowledge of Him is enough for me. At nighttime the light of His Face is my morning's moon. (D 19143–44)

Be pure and become the dust of this doorway! Be not arrogant concerning the lovers' *samā*‘!

If you deny their *samā*‘, you will be gathered up with the dogs on the Day of Resurrection. (D 21326–27)

If you want your homeland full of the Beloved, go, empty the house of "others"!

And if you want the *samā*‘ to take effect, keep it far from denial's eye.

Whoever is not made drunk by the *samā*‘—consider him a denier, even if he accepts it . . .

Send him away on some pretext, so that you may reap the *samā*‘'s benefit;

Throw yourself out from the midst, so that you may grasp your own Self in your embrace! (D 12275–77, 79–80)

5. THE REVELRY OF THE SPIRIT

Winedrinking, intoxication, and revelry are images of union with the Beloved. Through wine the spirit discovers its true identity and attains to everlasting joy.

Bring wine, oh Saki—may my head and turban be Thy sacrifice! Bring the spirit's cup from wherever it is found!

Come drunk and strolling, goblet in hand—let it not be lawful for Thee to be the Saki and us to be so sober!

Bring the cup, for my spirit in its desire has left me—what place is this for patience and repose?

Bring the Cup of Life, whose nature is the same as Thine—for it is the friend of wounded hearts and the confidant of the mysteries.

Were a drop of that wine to fall upon barren ground, at once a rosegarden would blossom.

Were that ruby wine to bubble up at midnight, its lights would fill the heavens and the earth.

Marvellous wine! Marvellous flagon! Marvellous Saki! May spirits be strewn before them, strewn!

Come, for in my heart secrets are concealed—pass around the ruby wine and leave not a single veil in place!

When Thou hast made me drunk, then behold how a lion-catcher enters the hunt!

Blessed God! What a moment!—when our gathering is full of the cup's fragrance and the light of the Beloved's Face!

A thousand drunkards place their spirits on trays, like moths before the candle—"Take this, and bring wine!"

The sweet-voiced minstrels and shouting drunkards make the wine itself giddy in the Wine-seller's veins!

Behold the state of the young men of the cave who drank it: For three hundred nine years they slept ruined and drunk in the cave![32]

What wine did Moses pour upon the sorcerers? Drunkenly they surrendered their hands and feet like selfless men! (Koran VII 124)

What did the Egyptian women see in Joseph's face that made them cut their beautiful arms to shreds?

What did the Holy Saki pour upon Saint George's head so that all heartache left him and he had no fear of the unbelievers?

They killed him a thousand times, yet he kept on going: "I am drunk and unaware of 'one' or a 'thousand.'"[33]

The Companions who went naked before arrows were ruined and drunk because of Muḥammad the Chosen.

No, wrong! For Muḥammad was not the Saki—he was a cup full of wine, and God was the Saki of the pious.

Which wine did the son of Adham drink so that like a drunkard he became disgusted with his rule and kingdom?[34]

Which intoxication gave the call, "Glory to me!"?[35] Which spoke the mystery, "I am God," and went to the gallows?

The fragrance of that wine made water bright and pure—like a drunkard it goes toward the ocean making constant prostrations.

Love for this wine made the earth full of colors, its radiance lit up fire's sweet face.

If not for this wine, why did wind become an intimate and a tale bearer, the animator of pastures and gardens and a book of sayings?

What joy these four elements derive from mixing! Look how plants, animals, and men are their result!

What awareness-taking wine has this black night? For one cup of it knocks out the creatures.

Which Gentleness and handiwork of the Maker should I describe? The Sea of His Power has no shore!

Let us drink the wine of Love and carry Love's burden, like a camel drunk in the midst of a caravan—

Not such a drunkenness that will make you wish for intellect, but one that will awaken both intellect and spirit.

The drunkards will vomit everything other than God, for "other than God" is but headache and winesickness.

How is this pure wine related to the wine of the grape? This is the Water of Life, that other carrion.

For a while that wine makes you a pig, for a while a monkey—in the end that red water makes you black faced.

The heart is the vat of God's wine, so remove its stopper: The ill-mannered natural temperament has stopped it up with clay.

When you remove part of the clay from the top of the vat, its fragrance and a thousand benefits rise up.

If I should try to number those benefits, I would not be able to count them by the Last Day.

Since we are incapable, let us rest with the Prophet's prayer: "I cannot count Thy blessings!" Since it is time to stop counting, lift the spirit's cup!

Enter into the gathering of Shams al-Dīn's lovers! For the sun in heaven steals light from his sun. (D *1135*)

You are still caught at the stage of arranging your shoes and turban. How will you find the cup of the heavy drinker?

By my spirit, come for an instant to the Ruins! You are also human, you are a person, you have a spirit.

Come and pawn your Sufi cloak with the Wine-seller of Alast, for from that time—from before water and clay—there has been plenty of wine-selling.

Fakir, gnostic, and dervish—and then you are sober? These names are all metaphors—you are imagining things.

Are not *samā'* and the wine-drinking of *He gave to drink* the work of the dervish? Are not profit and loss, more and less, the work of the merchant?

Come, tell us, what is "Alast"? Everlasting joy. Do not tarry in hypocrisy, for you are completely prepared for the Way!

Why do you bind a head that has no pain? why do you pretend your healthy body is sick? (D *3067*)

Oh minstrel, play this tune: "Our Friend has come drunk, pure and faithful Life has come drunk!"

If, like sparks, He should put on the robe of Severity, I will know Him, for He has come drunk to us in that guise many times!

If He should pour out my water and break my jug—say nothing, oh brother, for this Water-carrier has come drunk!

I try to deceive my Drunkard, and He smiles: "Look at this simple man, from whence has he come drunk?

Are you trying to deceive that Person the least of whose words makes water and fire selfless, earth and air drunk?"

I said to Him, "If I die and Thou comest to my grave, I will jump up shouting, 'That sweet-faced Beloved has come drunk!'"

He said, "How should the spirit of him who receives this breath die? He who is drunk with God subsists with Him forever."

Behold ineffable Love, filling the cuplike spirit! Behold the Face of the Saki, who has come from the realm of Subsistence, laughing and drunk.

Everyone in the world has chosen a friend, and ours is Love—from the time of Alast It has been drunk without you and me. (D *391*)

Again we have returned from the tavern drunk, again we have escaped from above and below.

All of the drunkards are joyful and dancing—clap your hands, oh idols, clap! Clap!

The fish and the sea are all intoxicated, for the hooks are the tips of Thy tresses!

Our Ruins have been turned upside down, the vat has been upset and the jar broken.

When the shaykh of the Ruins saw this tumult, he came to the roof and jumped.

A wine began to ferment, making existence nonexistent and nonexistence existent.

The glasses broke and the pieces fell in every direction—how many drinkers wounded their feet!

Where is he who cannot discern his head from his feet? He has fallen drunk in the lane of Alast.

The wine-worshipers are all busy with revelry—listen to the strumming of the lute, oh body-worshiper! (D *515*)

I.

The Beloved's Beloved

Rūmī's Religion of Love is a message to man from his True Beloved, reminding him that he is the object of God's words, "But for thee . . .".

1. LOVE'S CALL

Whether in the *Mathnawī* or the *Dīwān*, Rūmī constantly reminds the reader of his true self. Although he emphasizes the promises given by God's Gentleness, he does not neglect the threats of His Wrath and Severity.[36]

> Oh sir, you are mistaken in the ways of my Friend. You and a hundred like you are bewildered by me and my business.
>
> Every neck is not worthy for Love's sword—how should my blood-drinking Lion swallow down the blood of dogs?
>
> How should my Ocean support the planks of every ship? How should your salt-flat drink from my Clouds raining down pearls?
>
> Do not nod your head like that, do not shake your snout—how should an ass like you reach the oats in my Warehouse?
>
> Oh sir, come to yourself for a moment! Open your eyes a little—even though you are not equal to anything I say.

The man says, "Why does the lover become drunk and shameless?" When did wine ever leave shame, especially when poured by my Saki?

He who is deceived by a wolf learns the same deception and depravity—my artful Hunter makes him the snare of his own self.

How should they want to buy the ancient wolf in His bazaar? In my bazaar a living Joseph is displayed in every corner.

How should an owl like you be fit for the Garden of Iram? Not even the spirit's nightingale has found its way to my Rosery!

Pride of Tabriz! Sun of God and the religion! Tell me: Are not all these words of mine thy voice? (D *2056*)

Shame of every caravan! Iblis has routed you! Every time you decide on a course of action, you become his buffoon!

You have sacrificed yourself to the body for the sake of the devil's fodder—are you then the devil's goat or Iblis's lamb?

Oh man of good coin! Why do you have regrets? Submit your neck—you only suffer these slaps because you are Iblis's coin.

Cooked turnip! Cut off all hope for that green garden—for you sit next to bread, like Iblis's salad.

When you see bread, you fall down on your face like a catamite—you are in love with the devil's sperm and Iblis's penis!

You make the intention to fast, but then the feedbag says to you, "Oh ass, put your head into Iblis's feedbag!"

You have no idea of what your true situation will be—with all your knowledge and erudition, you are nothing but Iblis's sack.

You have wasted yourself away in concern over how to plump up your body; you have begun to wail as if you were Iblis's own throat!

Whether you swallow down unbelief or faith, you vomit them up like a dog—your faith and unbelief are only in Iblis.

Until the day death comes like bad vinegar and catches in your throat, you will be sour and rotten like Iblis's gargle!

Keep on darting around those circular loaves of bread and piled-up tables like a fly—until the Day of Resurrection, you will be in Iblis's circle! (D *2879*)

Oh heart, place no honey in the mouth of the ill! Speak not of entrancing eyes in the assembly of the blind!

Although God is nearer to His servant than his jugular vein (Koran L 16), He is far from those who are far from Him.

Occupy yourself with your own inward self! Then like moons the concealed maidens will come out in theophany from behind their veils!

Although in this work you will be lost to yourself and the world, outside of yourself and the world you will be famous.

If you are the moon of union, give a sign of your union! Tell of the arms, the silver breasts, and the faces of the houris!

And if you are yellow gold from separation's heartache, where is separation's burning brand? Only the coins of the wretched are so dull and tarnished.

Since you have no love, at least perform the duties of servanthood, for God will never neglect the wages of the wage earners.

Know that love for God is Solomon's seal—how should Solomon's income be related to the wages of ants?

Throw away the garments of thought and cogitation, for the sun only shines upon the naked!

Seek refuge in the locks of Shams-i Tabrīzī, for they rain down musk and will protect you from tyrants. (D *2073*)

Pollute not your lips by kissing every mouth and eating every food! Then the Beloved's lips will make them drunk and feed them sugar.

Your lips will be freed from the odor of the lips of "others" and your love will be made transcendent, pure and one.

The lips that kiss the ass's arse—how should the Messiah bless them with his sugar kiss?

Know that everything other than the eternal light has newly come into existence—why do you sit upon a heap of new dung and ask for contemplation?

When the manure has been annihilated in the heart of the vegetable patch, then it will be freed from its dungness and add savor to food.

As long as you are excrement, how will you know the joy of sanctification? Pass beyond your dung-nature and go to the Blessed and Transcendent!

When the Messiah held back his hand from every sour stew, his hand became the remedy of all the world.

When Moses washed his hands and lips of Pharoah's bounty, the Ocean of Generosity gave him the White Hand. (Koran VII 108)

If you want to escape the stomach and lips of all the unripe, be full of pearls but bitter on the surface like the ocean.

Take heed! Turn your eyes away from others, for that Eye is jealous. Take heed! Keep your stomach empty, for He has set for you a table.

If a dog has eaten its fill, it will not catch any game, for the running and racing of aspiration derives from hunger's fire.

Where are a pure heart and pure lips to receive a pure cup? Where is an agile Sufi to run after the *halva*?

Display the Realities in these words of mine, oh He who passes us the wine and cup! (D *96*)

Samā' is only for the restless spirit—so jump up quickly, why do you wait?

Do not sit here with your own thoughts—if you are a man, go to the Beloved.

Do not say, "Perhaps He does not want me." What business has a thirsty man with such words?

Does the moth think about the flames? For Love's spirit, thought is disgrace.

When the warrior hears the sound of the drum, at once he is worth ten thousand men!

You have heard the drum, so draw your sword without delay! Your spirit is the sheath of the all-conquering Dhu'l-Faqār![37]

Strike the sword and take the kingdom of Love, for Love's kingdom will last forever.

You are Ḥusayn at Karbalā, think not of water! The only "water" you will see today is a sword of the first water![38] (D *338*)

Oh seeker on the path of religion, let me give you a piece of advice—heart-pleasing, well-measured advice.

Sit not in heedlessness with the greedy, for mangy spirits will make your spirit mangy.

If your heart becomes purified of itching, it will find the sweetness of *the fig* (XCV 1).

Oh impotent man, when you become a man of God, brides will boil up from within your heart.

Like the moon, Venus, the sun and the Pleiades, peris will show their faces within the well of your eyes.

Drink down what we say, for these are Love's instructions—instructions will not profit you much in the grave.

Display your charity by giving the yellow gold of your heartache to these beautiful brides—then ugly women will not deceive you with their praise.

These beautiful maidens only want someone who can discern their beauty—you cannot deceive them with a dowry.

These rose-faced beauties will be ashamed of you if you sell your true nature for dung.

Of the two millstones, the lower carries the weight—is not the lower worth more than the upper?

The more valuable building block has suffered more blows from the chisel.

Sinai is excellent among mountains because it was crushed by God's theophany (Koran VII 143).

Silent! Be patient! Where is your constancy? But when did Love ever leave anyone constancy? (D *1911*)

Sanā'ī! If you do not find a friend, be your own friend! In this world of every kind of man and every kind of task, be a man for your own task![39]

Each member of this caravan is stealing his own baggage—place your own self behind and sit before your baggage!

People sell ephemeral beauty and buy ephemeral love—pass beyond those two dry riverbeds and be your own river!

These friends of yours keep on pulling you by the hand toward nonexistence—steal back your hand and be your own helper!

These beauties painted on canvas veil the beauties of the heart—lift up the veil and enter: Be with your own Beloved!

Be with your own Beloved and be a well-thinking, good man! Be more than the two worlds—dwell in your own domain!

Go, do not become drunk with the wine that increases arrogance—behold the brightness of that Face and be soberly aware of your own Self! (D *1244*)

How long will you move backwards? Come forward! Enter not into unbelief, come to religion!

Behold the elixir hidden within the venom—come to the venom! And come, return to the root of the root of your own self!

Although in form you are earthly, you have been kneaded from certainty's substance.

You guard the treasury of God's Light—so come, return to the root of the root of your own self!

Once you have tied yourself to selflessness, you will be delivered from selfhood

And released from the ties of a hundred snares—so come, return to the root of the root of your own self!

You were born of the children of God's vicegerent, but you have turned your eyes to this low world.

Alas, how can you be happy with just this? So come, return to the root of the root of your own self!

Though you are the talisman protecting the world's treasure, within yourself you are the Mine.

Open your hidden eyes and come, return to the root of the root of your own self!

You were born of the rays of God's Majesty and have gained the good fortune of your auspicious star.

So how long will you suffer at the hands of nonexistent things? Come! Return to the root of the root of your own self!

You are a ruby in the midst of granite—how long will you try to deceive us?

We can see the truth in your eyes—so come, return to the root of the root of your own self!

You came here from the presence of that haughty Friend, so you are drunk, gentle, and heart-ravishing,

And your eyes are sweet and full of fire—so come, return to the root of the root of your own self!

The king and saki, Shams-i Tabrīzī, has placed before you the everlasting cup.

Glory be to God! What marvellous pure wine! So come, return to the root of the root of your own self! (D *120*)

In truth, love for the Illuminator of hearts keeps lovers awake all night without food and sleep.

Oh friend, if you are a lover, be like a candle: Melt all night long, burn joyfully till morning!

He who is like cold weather in autumn is no lover—in autumn's midst the lover's heart is burning summer.

Dear friend, if you have a love you want to proclaim, then shout like a lover! Shout! Shout!

But if you are chained by sensuality, make no claims to Love—enter the spiritual retreat and burn away your chains!

Oh simple man, how can a lover be joined to sensuality? How could Jesus eat from the same trough as his ass?

If you want to catch the fragrance of these symbols, then turn your eyes away from everything but Shams al-Dīn of Tabriz!

But if you cannot see that he is greater than the two worlds, you are still a wretch drowned in the ocean of heedlessness.

So go before the teachers of conventional knowledge—busy yourself with jurisprudence and become a master of the science of "This is permitted and that is forbidden."

My spirit has passed beyond childhood in love for Shams al-Dīn—love for him is not mixed with raisins and nuts.

My intellect has left me and my verses are incomplete—that is why my bow has no more designs and wrappings.

Oh Jalāl al-Dīn, sleep and abandon speech! No leopard will ever catch *that* lion! (D *1196*)

2. LOVE'S MESSENGER

As the successor to the Prophet, the shaykh is God's messenger on earth. The ghazals that discuss the shaykh's spiritual station and the mysteries of his union with God are particularly powerful when sung in the first person.

Let us choose one another as companions! Let us sit at each other's feet!

Oh friends, sit a little closer, so that we may see each other's faces!

Inwardly we have many harmonies—think not that we are only what you see.

Now that we are sitting together, our hands hold the wine and our sleeves are full of roses.

We have a way from this visible world to the Unseen, for we are the companions of religion's messenger.

We have a way from the house to the garden, we are the neighbor of cypress and jasmine.

Every day we come to the garden and see a hundred blossoms.

In order to scatter them among the lovers, we fill our skirts to overflowing.

Whatever we gather from the garden we put down, and then we pick out the best.

Steal not your hearts away from us—we are no thief, we are trustworthy.

Behold our words! They are the fragrance of those roses—we are the rosebush of certainty's rosegarden.

The world is filled with the fragrance of those roses. They say, "Come! For we are like this!"

When we caught their scent, they took us away—they make us great, though we be small.

We may be Love's least slave, but like Love we wait in ambush. (D *1553*)

Were I a plaything in the hand of every heartache, I would not be clever and wise, but a fool.

Did not the sun of Love belong to me, like Saturn I would sometimes ascend in grief, and sometimes descend.

Were the fragrance of Love's city not my guide, I would be caught by the ghouls, like those lost in greed's desert!

If the Sun of the spirits remained sitting in its house, I would be busy with opening doors and coming and going.

If the Rosegarden of the spirit did not caress the afflicted, how could I be a messenger from the Garden of Faithfulness, like the east wind?

Were Love not a *samāʻ*-lover and tambourine-addict, why would I be singing songs like a flute and a harp?

If my Saki did not give me a potion to make me plump, I would be as thin as the lip of the cup.

Did not the Garden have branches and shade, I would be without roots, like the trees of fortune of vile men.

Had not God's Trust shone upon my earth, I would be *sinful, very foolish*, like the earthly temperament.[40]

Were there no way from the grave to paradise, why am I so joyful and expansive in this grave of the body?

And were there no road from left to right, why am I the companion of the north and south winds like the garden?

Were there no Garden of Generosity, how could I have blossomed? If not for God's Gentleness and Bounty, I would be a meddlesome bore!

Enough! Listen to the story's sunrise from the Sun! If there were no such sunrise, I would have set! (D *2996*)

Before such spirit-bestowing Beauty, how should I not die? How should I not go mad and seize hold of Thy chainlike tresses?

When I drink Thy wine, how should I not be obliterated? Thou art wine and I am water, Thou art honey and I am milk.

Open Thy mouth, that infinite candy—if Thou acceptest not my excuses, well, I accept Thy blandishments!

Dost Thou know why I laugh? Because of my own high aspiration—in the city of Thy Love, I am the prince of lovers!

I and eternal Love were born into the world from a single womb—though I appear as a new lover, by God I am exceedingly ancient!

If you open your own eye, you will be fitting only for yourself. But if you find this vision, you will know that I am peerless.

Like Men, I fire up the stove of all those who are cold; and within the stove of warm spirits, my dough is cooked to the greatest perfection!

In my gentleness, I am like milk—I never become caught in the throat. Make no mistakes, though I be salty like cheese!

In my love for Shams of Tabriz, I am a sultan wearing a crown—but when he comes to the throne, I am his vizier. (D *1695*)

This caravan is not bringing *our* baggage—it has none of the fire of *our* Friend.

Though the trees have all turned green, they have caught no scent of our spring.

Your spirit may be a rosegarden, but its heart has not been wounded by our thorn.

Your heart may be an ocean of realities, but its boiling does not compare with that of our shore.

Although the mountains are very steady—by God, they do not have our steadiness.

The spirit drunk with the morning wine has not even caught a scent of our winesickness.

Venus herself, the minstrel of heaven, has not the capacity for our work.

Ask us about the lion of God—every lion has not our backbone.

Show not Shams-i Tabrīzī's coin to him who has not our fineness! (D *695*)

How do you know what birds we are or what we recite every moment beneath our breath?

How can anyone bring us to hand? We are sometimes the treasure, sometimes the ruins!

The heavens revolve for our sake—that is why we keep on turning like a wheel.

How should we remain in this house? In this house we are all guests.

Although in form we are beggars in the lane, behold our attributes! Then you will know what sort of sultan we are!

Since tomorrow we will be king in all of Egypt, why should we grieve if today we are imprisoned?

As long as we have been in this form, no one has troubled us, nor have we troubled anyone.

When Shams-i Tabrīzī becomes our guest, we are multiplied hundreds of millions of times! (D *1767*)

How should you know what kind of King is my inward companion? Look not at my yellow face, for I have legs of iron!

I have turned my face totally to that King who brought me here: I have a thousand praises for Him who created me.

One moment I am the sun, the next an ocean of pearls. Inwardly I have the majesty of the spheres, outwardly the lowliness of the earth.

Within this jar of the world I wander like a bee—look not only at my wailful buzzing, for I have a house full of honey!

Oh heart, if you are seeking us, come up to the blue dome—my palace is a fortress that gives me the security of the secure.

How awesome is the water that turns the millstone of the heavens! I am the water's wheel—that is why my cries are so sweet!

Since you see that devils, mankind, and jinn all follow my command, can you not understand that I am Solomon and that on my ring is a seal?

Why should I be withered? Every one of my particles has blossomed! Why should I be an ass's slave? I am mounted upon Burāq!

Why should I be less than the moon? No scorpion has bit my foot! Why should I not come out of this well? I have grasped a strong rope!

I have built a house for the spirit's pigeons—fly in this direction, oh bird of the spirit, for I possess a hundred inaccessible towers!

I am a ray of the Sun, though I wander about all these houses. I am carnelian and gold and rubies, though I was born of water and clay!

Whatever pearl you see, seek another within it! Every dustmote says, "Inwardly I am a treasure!"

Every jewel says to you, "Be not satisfied with my beauty, for the light in my face derives from the candle of my awareness!"

I will be silent, for you have not the intelligence to understand—do not nod your head, try not to deceive me, for I have an eye that discerns intelligence. (D *1426*)

Look at *me*! If you gaze at anyone else, for certain you are unaware of love for God!

Behold the face that has received its radiance from God! Perhaps all at once you may win good fortune from it.

Since intellect is your father and the body your mother, behold the beauty of your father's face! Show that you are his son!

Know that from head to foot the shaykh is nothing but God's Attributes, even if you see him in human form.

In your eyes he is like foam, but he describes himself as the Ocean; in the eyes of men he is standing still, but every instant he is traveling.

You still find it difficult to grasp the shaykh's state, even though he displays a thousand of God's greatest signs—how dull you are!

A spiritual Form, purified of the elements, reached the heart's Mary from God's Court—

A passing messenger impregnated the heart with a breath concealing the spirit's mystery.

Oh heart made pregnant by that King! When you put down your burden, be sure to gaze upon it!

When Shams-i Tabrīzī gives form to that burden, you will become like the heart—and like the heart, you will fly to the Unseen! (D *3072*)

I have not abandoned your work—I am always busy with it; at each moment you become dearer to me.

By my own pure essence and the sun of my empire! I will not let you go, I will lift you up in gentleness.

I will illuminate your face with my own radiance and scratch your head with the ten fingers of forgiveness!

A thousand clouds of grace have filled the sky of God's good pleasure—if I should allow their rain to fall, I will let it fall upon your head.

I have girded the loins of my gentleness to comfort you, for you have seen the blessings of my comfort and union.

A thousand healing potions boiled up in Love on that night you said to me, "I am ill."

Come forward, so that I may apply a new collyrium to your eyes—perhaps they will become bright enough to comprehend my mysteries.

How should I hold back my gentleness from the elect of my own elect? For in the perfection of my generosity, I extend a helping hand to others as well.[41]

I have seized you as a thief and turned you over to the guards, for the goblet of my treasury was found in your saddlebag.[42]

You are bewildered at my severity and have no chance to speak—though I am mightily severe, a thousand gentlenesses are hidden in my severity.

Did not Benjamin find his Joseph through that blow? Perceive only gentleness in all my acts!

Joseph took him apart and explained what had happened: "I would not inflict the pain of heartache without reason."

I will be silent so that you may be alone—but never think badly of me, oh my captive! (D *1723*)

Oh lovers! Oh lovers! I turn dust into gems! Oh minstrels! Oh minstrels! I fill your tambourines with gold!

Oh thirsty souls! Oh thirsty souls! Today I am giving water to drink! I will transform this dustbin into paradise, a celestial pool.

Oh helpless men! Oh helpless men! Relief has come! Relief has come! I turn everyone with a wounded and aching heart into a sultan, a Sanjar.

Oh elixir! Oh elixir! Look at me, for I transmute a hundred monasteries into mosques, a hundred gallows into pulpits!

Oh unbelievers! Oh unbelievers! I unfasten your locks! For I am the absolute ruler: I make some people believers, others unbelievers!

Oh sir! Oh sir! You are wax in my hands! If you become a sword, I will make you a cup; if you become a cup, I will make you into a sword.

You were a sperm-drop and became blood, then you gained this harmonious form—come to me, oh son of Adam! I will make you even more beautiful.

I turn grief into joy and guide the lost, I make the wolf into Joseph and poison into sugar!

Oh sakis! Oh sakis! I have opened my mouth in order to marry every dry lip to the lip of the cup!

Oh rosegarden! Oh rosegarden! Borrow roses from my rosery! Then I will place your sweet herbs next to the lotus.

Oh heaven! Oh heaven! You will become even more bewildered than the narcissus when I make dust into ambergris, thorns into jasmine.

Oh Universal Intellect! Oh Universal Intellect! Whatever you say is true. You are the ruler, you are munificent—let me stop my speaking. (D *1374*)

I have returned, like the new year, to break the locks of the prison and smash the claws and teeth of these man-eating spheres.

The seven waterless planets are devouring the creatures of earth—I will throw water upon their fire and still their winds.

I have flown from the beginningless King like a falcon in order to kill the parrot-eating owls of this ruined monastery.

From the beginning I made a covenant to sacrifice my spirit to the King. May my spirit's back be broken should I break my pledge and covenant!

Today I am Āṣaf, Solomon's vizier, sword and firman in hand—I will break the necks of any who are arrogant before the King.

If you see the garden of the rebellious flourishing for a day or two, grieve not! For I will cut their roots from a hidden direction.

I will break nothing but injustice or the evil-intentioned tyrant—should anything have a mote of savor, then I am an unbeliever should I break it!

Wherever there is a polo ball, it is taken away by the mallet of Oneness—if a ball does not roll down the field, I will smash it with the blow of my mallet.

I now reside in His banquet, for I saw that His intention is Gentleness. I became the least servant of His way in order to break Satan's legs.

I was a single nugget, but when the Sultan's hand grasped hold of me, I became the mine—if you place me in the balance, I will break the scales.

When you allow a ruined and drunken man like myself into your house, do you not know at least this much: I will break this and break that?

If the watchman shouts, "Hey!" I will pour a cup of wine on his head; and if the doorman seizes hold of me, I will break his arm.

If the spheres do not rotate round my heart, I will pull them up by the roots; if the heavens act with villainy, I will smash the turning heavens.

Thou hast spread the tablecloth of Generosity and invited me to lunch—why doest Thou rebuke me when I break the bread?

No, no—I sit at the head of Thy table, I am the chief of Thy guests. I will pour a cup or two of wine upon the guests and break their shame.

Oh Thou who inspirest my spirit with poetry from within! Should I refuse and remain silent, I fear I would break Thy command.

If Shams-i Tabrīzī should send me wine and make me drunk, I would be free of cares and break down the pillars of the universe! (D *1375*)

Look at me! I will be your intimate in the grave on the night you pass from shop and home.

You will hear my salaams in the tomb and then you will know that you were never hidden from my sight.

Behind your veil I am like your intellect and awareness—at the time of joy and happiness, at the time of suffering and infirmity.

When you hear the voice of a friend on that lonely night, you will be delivered from the striking of the serpents and the fear of the ants.

The winesickness of Love will bring you a gift in the grave: wine, witnesses, candles, kabobs, sweetmeat, and incense.

When we light intellect's lamp, what a shouting and uproar will arise from the dead in their graves!

The dust of the graveyard will be bewildered by the shouting and uproar, by the sound of the Resurrection's drum, by the tremendous tumult of the Uprising.

He whose shroud is torn apart will cover his ears in terror—but what are brain and ears next to the blast of the Trumpet?

Wherever you look you will see my form—whether you look at yourself or at that noise and confusion.

Flee from cross-eyed vision and straighten out your eyes—for on that day, the evil eye will be far from my beauty!

Beware! Beware! Gaze not at my human form! Make no mistake, for the spirit is terribly subtle and Love terribly jealous!

What place is this for form?! Were the felt covering even a hundred fold, the radiance of the spirit's mirror would show its banner.

Strike the drums and wind your way to the minstrels in the city! The young men of Love's way are holding a day of purification.

If the blindmen had sought out God instead of morsels and money, not one of them would be left sitting on the edge of the moat.

Why have you opened a tale bearer's house in our city? Be a shut-mouth tale bearer, like light! (D *1145*)

Though the eye of intellect and competence see me as mad, I have many arts in the circle of lovers.

Love has made me Solomon and my tongue Āṣaf—how should I be tied to all these remedies and incantations?

Like Abraham I never turn away from the Kaaba—I reside in the Kaaba, I am its pillar.[43]

A thousand Rustams cannot approach me—why should I be subject to the effeminate ego?

I take the bloody sword in hand—I am a martyr to Love in the midst of my own blood.

In this plain, I am the All-Merciful's nightingale.
Seek not for my limit and border—I have no limits.
Shams-i Tabrīzī has nurtured me through love—
I am greater than the Holy Spirit and the Cherubim. (D *1747*)

The day is coming when these words of mine
will testify against you:
"I called you—I, the Water of Life—
but you turned a deaf ear." (D 25658)

Notes

Introduction

1. A broad and thorough survey of Rūmī's life, works, and significance is provided by Annemarie Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun* (London: East-West Publications, 1978). The existence of this excellent book, which is particularly strong in its treatment of the poetical and literary dimensions of Rūmī's work, relieves me of the need to provide certain background material that might otherwise be necessary.
2. S.H. Nasr, *Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī: Supreme Persian Poet and Sage* (Tehran: Shūrā-ye 'Ālī-ye Farhang o Honor, 1974), p. 23.
3. For list of abbreviations, see p. ix. For complete bibliographical details, see the Index of Sources.
4. Nasr, *Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī*, p. 23.
5. Rūmī employs his own name ("Jalāl al-Dīn") in only one ghazal (D *1196*); for a translation of the poem, see the end of section III, I, 1.
6. Aflākī, *Manāqib al-'ārifīn*, ed. by T. Yazıcı, 2 vols. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1959–1961), pp. 102–103.
7. One thousand ghazals end with Shams's name or mention him, fifty-six are dedicated to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, fourteen to Ḥusām al-Dīn, and four to other figures. Two thousand, one hundred fifty mention no name. Over five hundred of these end with the phrase "Be silent" or something to that effect, employing the word *khāmūsh*, a fact which has led certain scholars to suggest that Rūmī employed "*khāmūsh*" as a pen name. However, the context and grammatical structure in many of these cases show that this cannot be true. Moreover, Rūmī ends hundreds of other ghazals with similar phrases, such as "Enough." A more logical explanation of the reason he employs the word "*khāmūsh*" so often is that he appreciated the virtues of silence and liked to praise it as a convenient device to bring a ghazal to a close.

8. B. Furūzānfar, *Risālah dar taḥqīq-e aḥwāl wa zindigānī-ye Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn*, 2nd. ed. (Tehran: Tābān, 1333/1954), p. 216.
9. This point will become abundantly clear in the course of the selections. See especially section III, E, 2.
10. This work was edited and translated into French by S. de Laugier de Beaurecueil (Cairo: l'Institut française d'archéologie orientale, 1962).
11. In this regard Nicholson was more successful than Arberry, whose translation of *Fīhi mā fīhi* is marred by many errors which can probably be attributed to carelessness and haste in preparation of the text. In addition, Arberry's attempts at verse translations of the *Rubā'iyyāt* are far from successful, either in providing an accurate translation or in giving a feeling for the original flavor of the poetry.
12. Both Nicholson and Arberry translate *ṣūrat* consistently as "form," but they translate *ma'nā* according to their understanding of the context. Nicholson employs at least ten different translations, including the following: meaning, reality, spiritual reality, essential reality, spirit, spiritual truth, spiritual principle, spiritual thing, essence, idea, ideal thing. Arberry adds at least four other renderings: truth, heavenly truth, abstraction, verity. A few other examples of technical terms which one or both of them translate inconsistently, along with my own renderings, are the following: *qalb* and *dil* (heart), *jān* and *rūḥ* (spirit), *khayāl* (imagination, image), *'aql* (intellect), *lutf* (gentleness), *qahr* (severity), *ghamm* (heartache), *dard* (pain), *ranj* (suffering), *khumār* (winesickness).
13. The Index of Sources provides a list of all the passages translated in the present work and also indicates those which have been translated by Nicholson or Arberry.

PART I: THEORY

1. S. H. Nasr pointed out the fundamental importance of this distinction in Rūmī's works in his *Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī*.
2. "I am God" is the famous saying of the Sufi martyr Ḥallāj and plays an important role in Rūmī's teachings (see III, A, 7). It should also be remarked that here "death" refers both to the death of the body, upon which things are seen with piercing vision (see I, D, 11), and to the "spiritual death" whereby man is reborn in God (see III, A, 5).
3. Abū Jahl, the "father of ignorance," is the title given by the Prophet to one of his contemporaries in Mecca who did everything in his power to thwart the new religion.
4. Within the selections, Koranic quotations are indicated by italics and, if necessary, chapter and verse.
5. The spirit belongs to the created order, a fact affirmed by the prophetic hadith quoted below. Rūmī delineates the four levels of spirit explicitly in two passages, the first of which is translated below (M II 3326–29, IV 1887–89).
6. The "single soul" (*nafs-i wāḥid*) is referred to both in the Koran and the Hadith. See below, the end of section I, D, 3.
7. In Sufism the *nafs* is often divided into three levels according to Koranic terminology: The *nafs-i ammārah*, or the soul which incites to evil, is the level of the ego, as we saw above. The two higher stages, *lawwāmah* (the soul

that "blames" itself for its own faults) and *muṭma'innah* (the soul "at peace" with God) are sometimes referred to by Rūmī (for example, M V 557, D 9047, 23068, 29515, 31182, 34209). Rūmī also mentions the "Universal Soul" (*nafs-i kull* or *kullī*), which is the passive pole of spiritual existence, as opposed to the active pole, the Universal Intellect (see M II 173, D 2507, 4884, 32426, 33296); and he refers to the "supernal souls" (*nufūs*), which are equivalent to the "celestial intellects" (*'uqūl*; M VI 450, VI 3072). In one passage of *Fīhi mā fīhi*, *nafs* is taken to mean the higher spirit and *rūḥ* the animal spirit (F 56/68). Many other examples are also found where Rūmī employs the word *nafs* in a positive sense, as equivalent to "spirit." In such instances I have translated it as soul instead of ego.

8. Solomon is well-known for his miraculous powers over all the forces of nature, especially the wild animals and the jinn. Rūmī refers to him frequently in his poetry, making use of several different stories related in Islamic sources. The most important of these for our purposes are the following: 1. Solomon's seal. Solomon's miraculous seal or signet ring provided him with his power over man, nature, and the jinn. "And his hosts were mustered to Solomon, jinn, men, and birds" (Koran XXVII 17). On one occasion a jinni assumed Solomon's shape and was able to steal his seal, and for a short time he ruled over Solomon's kingdom. 2. The language of the birds. In the Koran Solomon says, "Men, we have been taught the language of the birds" (XXVII 16). The Sufis interpret this to mean the language of the divine mysteries or of the birds of the spirit which fly in God's Presence. 3. The ants. When Solomon's armies "came to the Valley of Ants, an ant said, 'Ants, enter your dwelling places, lest Solomon and his hosts crush you, being unaware.' But Solomon smiled, laughing at its words." (XXVII 19). Rūmī often contrasts the spiritual with the material or the essential to the nonessential through the image of Solomon and the ants.

9. The feminine nature of the ego is discussed in II, C, 4.

10. The word *sirr*, literally "mystery" but usually translated as "inmost consciousness," is roughly synonomous with heart as defined, but Rūmī rarely employs the term. "The inmost consciousness is like the root of a tree; although hidden, its effects appear in the leaves and branches." (F 187/196) See also M III 4386, D 20438, 23410, 35151.

11. Rūmī alludes here to Moses' words in the Koran: "Oh my Lord, show me, that I may behold Thee!" The verse continues, "Said He, 'Thou shalt not see Me; but behold the mountain—if it stays fast in its place, then thou shalt see Me.' And when his Lord revealed His theophany to the mountain, He made it crumble to dust; and Moses fell down swooning" (VII 143). Rūmī often refers to the crumbling of Mount Sinai.

12. Rūmī is not implying that only one person has access to the heart that sees God. Rather, he is alluding to him who has realized this station to the utmost perfection, i.e., the greatest of the saints, often referred to by other Sufis as the "pole" (*quṭb*). All the other saints are ranked in a hierarchy beneath him; they derive sustenance from him and "revolve about him." As the most perfect saint, he is the center of the universe, which derives its existence from that of man (see I, D, 1). In Rūmī's own terminology, the word *quṭb* is used more or less synonomously with *walī* (saint). In one passage he

defines the *quṭb* as the "gnostic who has reached union" (M V between 2338 and 2339).

> The *quṭb* is he who turns round about himself—the celestial spheres rotate round about him. (M V 2345)
>
> To turn round about oneself is an error, except for the *quṭb* in his beauty—for him it is allowed and permitted, for he travels in the Native Land. (D 18746)

See also M I 2129, II 1984, IV 1418.

13. There are many schemes for classifying the Names and Attributes according to different schools of Islamic thought. The one chosen here corresponds to what is implied by Rūmī's works. In order to keep this discussion within bounds, certain clarifications and amplifications normally added by texts on theology and metaphysics have been ignored. The Names provided in the table are taken from the well-known saying of the Prophet on the "ninety-nine Names of God." For a translation of the hadith, see *Mishkat al-masabih*, trans. by J. Robson, 4 vols. (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1963–1965), pp. 483–484.

14. A further reference to Moses' request to see God (note 11 above).

15. For the Koranic account of Moses' rod, its being changed into a serpent, and its swallowing down the "cords" of the sorcerers, see VII 115 ff., XX 65 ff., XXVI 43 ff.

16. For example, 'Afīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī, disciple of Ibn al-'Arabī and companion of Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī, writes that the four fundamental divine Attributes of Life, Knowledge, Will, and Power are reflected as fire, air, water, and earth respectively (*Sharḥ al-asmā' al-husnā*, commentary on the Name *al-baṣīr*, ms. Lâleli 1556, Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul). In a similar way, al-Qūnawī's disciple al-Farghānī ascribes each of the qualities of the elements to a Name: Life—heat, Knowledge—cold, Will—wetness, Power—dryness (*Muntaha'l-madārik*, Cairo: Maktab al-ṣanā'i', 1293/1876, vol. I, p. 54).

17. An allusion to a hadith: "The heart of the believer is between two of the fingers of the All-Merciful."

18. In Islamic sources, Joseph is said to be the most beautiful person ever created by God. Rūmī constantly refers to him as an example of the divine Beauty reflected in human form.

19. Rustam is the archetypal heroic champion of ancient Persia, immortalized by Firdawsī in the *Book of Kings*. Ḥamzah is an uncle of the Prophet and one of the great warriors of early Islam.

20. Pain and suffering increase awareness and knowledge of God. See chapter III, C, 1.

21. See for example D 645, 2707, 7482, 32890.

22. As certain Sufis have pointed out explicitly, the properties and influence of each visible heaven correspond in a certain respect to the spiritual radiance of a particular prophet, but the prophets do not "dwell" in the heavens, since their spirits transcend localization. See Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī, *al-Fukūk*, printed on the margin of al-Kāshānī's *Sharḥ manāzil al-sā'irīn*, Tehran, 1315/1897–1898, pp. 275–276; this passage is quoted by Jāmī in *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, ed. W. C. Chittick (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1977), pp. 240–241.

23. Again, Rūmī's close friend Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī, Ibn al-'Arabī's foremost disciple, discusses the descent of the spirit through the various heavens, the spheres of the elements, and the three kingdoms much more explicitly than does Rūmī himself; and he shows clearly the correspondence between the descent of the spirit and its reascent. For a summary of his teachings on this point, see W. C. Chittick and P.L. Wilson, *Fakhruddin 'Iraqi: Divine Flashes* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), pp. 162–164. For a much more detailed account, see Chittick, "The Circle of Spiritual Ascent According to al-Qūnawī," *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, ed. P. Morewedge (Albany: SUNY Press, forthcoming). For some of the Islamic background of this view of the soul's descent, compare al-Fārābī's "Neoplatonic" scheme (M. Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1970, pp. 136–139).

24. Burāq is the steed that took the Prophet to heaven on his *mi'rāj*.

25. On Ḥallāj's famous lines, see below, III, A, 5.

26. After Abraham smashed the idols of his people, the king of the time, Nimrod, ordered that he be thrown into a fire. But God delivered him from harm: "We said, 'Oh fire, be coolness and safety for Abraham!'" (Koran XXI 69).

27. On the meaning of imagination in Rūmī's teachings, see III, D.

PART II: PRACTICE

1. Rūmī does not deal with these matters explicitly, and there seems no reason to enter into the fine distinctions made by Islamic thought among the kinds of prophets, especially the *anbiyā'*, the *rusul*, and the *ūlu'l-'azm*. Rūmī may have ascribed to these distinctions, but they play no role in his teachings.

2. For example M III 704, 4317, IV 1416, 1853; D 17961.

3. The Sufis make a clear distinction between these two kinds of perfect saints: those who are given heaven's mandate to lead others on the Path and those who are not given this authority. Again Rūmī's friend Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī discusses this point explicitly in his *Tabṣirat al-mubtadī* (I have edited and translated this work and hope to publish it soon).

4. The story of Joseph and Zulaykhā or Potiphar's wife is generally treated by Rūmī and other poets as an archetypal example of the lover's devotion to the Beloved, although Joseph represents the Beloved and Zulaykhā the lover. In this verse Rūmī alludes to the Koranic account of their relationship, according to which Zulaykhā tried to seduce Joseph but he was able to escape: "They raced to the door, and she tore his shirt from behind" (XII 25). The account continues by telling how the women of the city blamed Zulaykhā: "'The governor's wife has been soliciting her page. . .'. When she heard their sly whispers, she sent to them, and made ready for them a repast; then she gave to each one of them a knife. 'Come forth, attend to them,' she said. And when they saw him, they so admired him that they cut their hands, saying, 'God save us! This is no mortal; he is no other but a noble angel.'" (XII 30–31).

5. Ad and Thamud were two peoples who, according to the Koranic accounts, were destroyed by God's wrath for their sinfulness.

6. Khiḍr or the "green prophet" is often identified with Elias. According to the accounts he drank the Water of Life and still appears to holy men to initiate them into the sublime mysteries.
7. The line contains an allusion to the Koran: "We gave David bounty from Us: 'Oh you mountains, echo God's praises with him.'" (XXXIV 10).
8. See Part I, note 8.
9. A reference to the Koran: "Mary pointed to the child then; but they said, 'How shall we speak to one who is still in the cradle, a little child?' He said, 'Lo, I am God's servant; God has given me the Book, and made me a prophet.'" (XIX 29 ff.).
10. The Prophet received an oath of allegiance from many of his Companions at Ḥudaybiyyah near Mecca in the year 6 A.H., an event alluded to in the Koran: "God was well pleased with the believers when they were swearing allegiance to thee under the tree" (XLVIII 18). This act became the prototype for the ceremony of initiation into Sufism, during which the shaykh takes the disciple's hand in his own and recites among other things the following verse: "Those who swear allegiance to thee swear allegiance in truth to God; God's hand is over their hands." (XLVIII 10).
11. Mount Qāf is a mythical mountain said to encompass the earth. The expression "from Mount Qāf to Mount Qāf" means the whole of the earth.
12. On the "image" which enters the heart, see III, D.
13. The Guarded Tablet (*lawḥ-i maḥfūẓ*), mentioned in the Koran as the locus wherein the Koran is inscribed (LXXXV 22), is usually interpreted in a cosmological sense to mean the Universal Soul, the passive pole of spiritual existence. Within it the Pen—the Universal Intellect—inscribes the knowledge of all things which are to come into existence. As a result, the created universe is born.
14. The Prophet said, "Oh how I desire to meet my brothers," a saying that is taken to refer to the saints who would be born in coming generations.
15. Bāyazīd of Basṭām is one of the greatest Sufi saints, often referred to by the title of "sultan of the gnostics." Yazīd is the second Umayyad caliph, the man responsible for the murder of the Prophet's grandson Ḥusayn, and in general an archetypical villain.
16. 'Alī is the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, the greatest warrior in Islam, and the patron saint of the chivalric brotherhoods (*futūwāt*).
17. Chapter V of the Koran is named after the "spread table" referred to in these verses: "And when the Apostles said, 'Oh Jesus, son of Mary, is thy Lord able to send down on us a Spread Table out of heaven? . . . Said Jesus son of Mary, 'Oh God, our Lord, send down upon us a Spread Table out of heaven, that shall be for us a festival . . . And provide for us; Thou art the best of providers.'" (V 112, 114).
18. In the story of Moses and Khiḍr in the Koran (XVIII 61–83), Moses sets out searching for the mysterious Khiḍr, whom God "had taught knowledge preceding from Us." (66). Moses says, "I will not give up until I reach the meeting of the two seas; though I go on for many years." (61). Here the reference to Khiḍr's being hidden by the sea seems to allude to this Koranic verse and the difficulty of finding access to him in general.
19. See Part I, note 8.

20. In the *Book of Kings*, Turan is the land of the Turks, who were constantly at war with the Iranians. In the present context, the expression Iran and Turan alludes to the whole of the inhabited world.

21. The metaphysical basis for this polarity is discussed in the school of Ibn al-ʻArabī. For example, al-Qūnawī's disciple al-Farghānī discerns the archetype of activity (*fāʻiliyyah*) and receptivity (*qābiliyyah*) in the Oneness and Manyness embraced by the Divinity. In other words, from the point of view of "Exclusive Unity" (*aḥadiyyah*) God is one in every respect and excludes all multiplicity. But from the point of view of "Inclusive Unity" (*wāḥidiyyah*) God's Oneness is the source of all manyness, a fact which is illustrated by the multiplicity of His Names. This corresponds to what we have already discussed: The Essence is absolutely One, but the Names imply the possibility of outward manifestation and plurality. So God's Essence is active in the sense that it is the source of all, while the Names are passive in the sense that everything they display derives from the Essence. But in relation to the world, the Names are active. See *Muntaha'l-madārik*, p. 13, partly quoted in Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, pp. 36–37. Al-Kāshānī confirms this point of view and adds that both active and passive Names are to be found at the level of Divinity. *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyyah*, on the margin of *Sharḥ al-manāzil al-sā'irīn*, p. 107; also *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, pp. 107–108.

22. ʻĀ'ishah was the Prophet's youngest wife, often said to be his favorite.

PART III: ATTAINMENT TO GOD

1. Rūmī even begins one of his ghazals with Ḥallāj's line and continues the poem for thirteen verses in the same rhyme and meter (D *2813*). See also M I 3934–35; III 3839, 4186–87; V 4135; VI 4062; D 4116. Examples of references to the Prophet's saying include M VI 724 (heading), 754; D 9931, 11966.

2. Idris, mentioned twice in the Koran, is usually identified with Enoch. He is said to have been on familiar terms with the angel of death and one day requested him to take his spirit; the angel did so and after a time returned it to his body.

3. Abū Saʻīd Abi'l-Khayr is one of the famous early Sufi masters.

4. According to the Sunnah of the Prophet, fasting is recommended on ʻĀshūrā, the tenth day of the month of Muḥarram. It was on this day that the Prophet's grandson Ḥusayn was martyred at Karbalā in the year 61/680.

5. The "phoenix" (*ʻanqā* or *sīmurgh*) dwells upon Mount Qāf. According to the ancient myths, if its shadow should fall upon a person, he will become king. In Sufism the phoenix often symbolizes the spirit of the saint or the saint himself, while Mount Qāf is his station in God's Presence.

> A call reached the spirits, "How long will you tarry? Return to your original home!
>
> Since Mount Qāf—Our proximity—is your original birthplace and existence, fly happily to Mount Qāf, for you are phoenixes!" (D 9964–65)

In the present passage, the "phoenix" seems to symbolize the spirit of sanctity, while the "alchemy" is the shaykh's power to transmute the spirits of disciples from copper to gold.

6. According to the Koran, Moses' adversary Pharoah said, "I am your Lord the Most High." (LXXIX 24).

7. Because of the wide range of meanings embraced by the word *'ishq* and its synonyms (e.g., *maḥabbat, dūstī*), I have tried to distinguish between some of them through the use of capital and lower-case letters: Love as a universal reality independent of man, or as an Attribute of God, is capitalized, while individual love as an attribute of man is not. However, it is very difficult to draw the line between the two usages, and a certain inconsistency may result.

8. For a discussion of the metaphysics of God's Love for the world, see Chittick and Wilson, *Fakhruddin 'Iraqi* (above, Part I, note 23), especially pp. 17–28.

9. Sanjar and Qubād are famous kings; the former was the last of the great Seljuks (d. 552/1157), while the latter reigned during the pre-Islamic Sassanid dynasty.

10. Abū Bakr and 'Umar, along with 'Uthmān and 'Alī, were the closest companions of the Prophet and the first four caliphs of Islam.

11. Korah, one of Moses' people, is said to have been the richest man alive. According to the Koran he was swallowed up by the earth for his sins and arrogance (XXVIII 81 and other passages).

12. Jamshīd is a mythical Iranian king and prophet, and also the first mortal. Here of course he symbolizes man's spiritual nature.

13. Sometimes Sufis will speak of the "forms" which are differentiated and defined within God's Knowledge. In this case the "meaning" beyond the form is God's Essence, which is absolutely undifferentiated.

14. In the school of Ibn al-'Arabī, the World of Imagination is defined as an intermediate realm between the World of Spirits and the World of Corporeal Bodies. In other words, it is more real than the material world but less real then the spiritual world. Moreover, it is the necessary means of contact between the two worlds; without it the World of Corporeal Bodies would cease to exist. It is simple and luminous in substance like the spiritual world, but possesses a multiplicity of forms like the material world. Without its intermediate situation, these two domains would have no means of contact. It is often referred to as the "isthmus" (*barzakh*) between the two sides. For further clarification, works on Ibn al-'Arabī and his school should be consulted. See for example my forthcoming article, "The Five Divine Presences: From al-Qūnawī to al-Qayṣarī," *Muslim World*, 1982. Rūmī himself only makes allusions to this world's "intermediate" nature; and it seems that his concept of imagination is broader than that of Ibn al-'Arabī and his followers.

15. The Companions are those Moslems who saw the Prophet in the flesh. According to his saying, "My Companions are like the stars; whichever of them you follow, you will find guidance."

16. The signs of the zodiac are divided into four groups in accordance with the four elements: earth—Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn; water—Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces; air—Gemini, Libra, and Aquarius; fire—Aries, Leo, and Saggitarius. Rūmī often alludes to astronomical and astrological terms, but only to employ them as symbols for his own purposes. He had no interest in these sciences as such.

17. Laylā and Majnūn ("the mad man") were pre-Islamic Arab lovers who have been immortalized through Arabic and Persian verse.
18. This line is a paraphrase of Koran LI 56: "I have not created the jinn and mankind except to worship Me."
19. Kawthar ("abundance") is the name of a fountain in Paradise.
20. The Fātiḥah, the "Opening" of the Koran, is an obligatory part of the ritual prayer.
21. Avicenna, probably the greatest philosopher in Islamic history, symbolizes the partial intellect.
22. The theme of the "three books"—the Koran, the universe; and man—is an important one in Sufism and provides the inspiration for certain major works, such as al-Qūnawī's *Tafsīr al-fātiḥah.*
23. "*Mufta'ilun*" is one of the many groups of syllables employed in scanning Arabic and Persian poetry.
24. In many lists of the divine Names, "He-who-leads-astray" (*al-muḍill*) is placed next to "He-who-guides" (*al-hādī*). The Name is implied by several Koranic verses, such as "God leads astray whomsoever He will, and He guides whomsoever He will." (XIV 4). Ibn al-'Arabī's followers point out that Iblis is the manifestation of this Name (see for example al-Qayṣarī's words, quoted by Jāmī in *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, p. 109). Here Rūmī alludes to the connection between Iblis and this Attribute, a connection also referred to in the Koran: "This is of Satan's doing; he is surely an enemy, an obvious one-who-leads-astray." (XXVIII 15).
25. However, translators are usually more inclined to take the derivative beloved into account than the True Beloved, a practice which often makes it difficult for the reader to discern the spiritual teaching intended by the poet.
26. Nicholson translated "witness" in this line as "favorite" and explains that here the erotic sense of the word is brought to the fore.
27. The reference is to Moses' swoon when God revealed His theophany to Mount Sinai (see above, Part I, note 11).
28. Rūm or the Byzantine Empire is employed by Rūmī to symbolize light and union, while the Ethiopians symbolize darkness and separation.
29. King Khusraw and Shīrīn are a pair of lovers often celebrated in Persian verse. Khusrawī or "royal" honey was a famous kind of exquisite honey. Shīrīn, whose name literally means "sweet," of course represents the Beloved.
30. These three figures, who lived in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, are among the most famous of the early Sufi masters.
31. Iram, referred to in the Koran (LXXXIX 7), was a garden built during the days of the prophet Hūd by one of the unbelievers in emulation of paradise. Here of course it symbolizes the garden of union.
32. The story of the "Companions of the Cave," or the seven sleepers of Ephesus, is recounted in the Koran (XVIII 9 ff.), where the length of their stay is also mentioned.
33. In Islamic sources Jirjīs is said to have been a prophet, although historically he seems to be identical with Saint George, who was put to death by Diocletian in the year 303. According to the accounts, he was tortured to death many times but each time returned to life.
34. Ibrāhīm ibn Adham is one of the great saints of early Islam. His life story is reminiscent of that of the Buddha.

35. "Glory be to me" is a famous "ecstatic utterance" of Bāyazīd, interpreted by the Sufis along the same lines as Ḥallāj's "I am God."
36. At this point I should remind the reader that I have been trying to avoid too many quotations from works already translated, especially the *Mathnawī* and *Fīhi mā fīhi*. Therefore in these last few chapters I have emphasized untranslated ghazals, although material from other sources could also be quoted in abundance.
37. Dhu'l-Faqār is the name of 'Alī's sword.
38. "Water" is always called to mind by the mention of Ḥusayn's death at Karbalā, since the army which surrounded his small band did not allow Ḥusayn's followers access to the river in spite of their great thirst.
39. Rūmī is referring to Sanā'ī's discussion of good and evil companions in his *Ḥadīqat al-ḥaqīqah* (ed. by M. Raḍawī, Tehran: Ṭahūrī, 1329/1950, pp. 448 ff.); more particularly, he is alluding to this line: "In this world are found a task for every man and a man for every task." (p. 449, line 4).
40. See section I, D, 1.
41. As a technical term in Sufism, "to extend a helping hand" (*dastgīr būdan*) means "to initiate" or "to receive the oath of allegiance." See above, Part II, note 10.
42. Rūmī compares his harsh treatment of a disciple to the stratagem employed by Joseph to keep Benjamin with himself (Koran XII 70 ff.; Gen. 44.1 ff).
43. According to the traditions, Abraham built the Kaaba and resided there for some time.

Appendix

Notes on the Translations

A comparison of those passages in this work also translated by Nicholson and Arberry will usually reveal a number of discrepancies, sometimes major ones. The purpose of this Appendix is to explain in some detail the reasons for the most important of these.

As stated in the Introduction, I have aimed at readability, sometimes at the expense of strict literal accuracy. One of the first reasons for the existence of differences in the translations is stylistic considerations of this sort. For example, Persian abounds in passive constructions; Nicholson and Arberry usually follow the same sort of sentence structure in English, whereas I have often preferred to make the sentences active. Very often the reader will notice that the overall sense of a verse is the same in both translations, but the relationship among the words has been altered considerably.

A second major reason for discrepancies is the fact that I have translated a large number of important terms consistently; often the significance of verses changes when seen in the total context of the use of a given term (for example, D *1705*).

Finally, the careful reader will notice a number of instances where the meaning of the verse has definitely changed in my version. In what follows I list the most important of these instances with explanations of the reason for the change. Since these notes are meant primarily for those who are able to read the original texts, I have not gone into detail in an attempt to make them comprehendible to the general reader; *wa'l-'āqil yakfīhi'l-ishārah*. The following abbreviations are employed: N—Nicholson; A—Arberry; AA—Arberry et al. (As is made clear by the preface to Arberry's second selection of ghazals

from the *Dīwān*, he himself did not complete the work before he died, and this task was carried out by a number of editors. Judging from the fact that there are significantly more inaccuracies and awkwardisms in the second selection than in the first, it seems obvious that the editors deserve a significant portion of the credit for the final version.)

20, l. 24–25 (F 39/51)

"The changes wrought by the Wheel of Heaven." A: "The changing about of the wheel of the sky" (*taṣarruf-i charkh-i falak*). In Persian *taṣarruf* is used more often in an active than a passive sense (see the Index of Technical Terms to Jāmī's *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*; also, my index to S.J Āshtiyānī's edition of Farghānī's *Mashāriq al-darārī*, Mashhad: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1978). Moreover, here the active sense is demanded by the idea: The turning of the heavens causes all the events that occur in the world (cf. section I, D, 4)

21, l. 13–14 (F 68/80)

"Think that they are the origin of everything that happens." A: "Do not distinguish between them and the actualities" (*kār-hā rā az ān asbāb mīdānand*). A mistakenly read *namīdānand*.

21, l. 33 (M IV 1007)

"Luminous Attributes of God." N: "Qualities of luminosity" (*ṣifāt-e anwarī*). A literal rendering would be: "the attributes of most-luminous-ness." God is *nūr al-anwār*, "Light of lights," and thus the attributes of greatest luminosity belong to Him. The context also shows that the divine Attributes are meant, in particular vs. 1015.

24, l. 36–37 (F 19/31)

"No, much more than importance." A. "Its importance lying in the fact that" (*chih jā-yi i'tibār*). A understands *chih* to mean "because," whereas here the sentence structure shows that it must be an exclamatory particle. Literally: "What place (is this) for importance!"

31, l. 11–12 (M II 188)

"The 'Single Soul' is the human spirit." N: "The human spirit is one essence" (*nafs-i wāḥid rūḥ-i insānī buwad*). Because N did not realize that Rūmī is explaining the significance of the well-known Koranic term *nafs-i wāḥid*, he was forced to translate *nafs* as "essence" to avoid an awkward repetition; but *nafs* cannot carry that meaning here, precisely because of the Koranic context.

31, l. 35–36 (M II 3326)

"Experience shows that the spirit is nothing but awareness." N: "(Spiritual) life is naught but knowledge in (the time of) trial" (*jān nabāshad juz khabar dar āzimūn*). The context shows that the subject is spirit, not life. *Azimūn* signifies "*āzmāyish, imtiḥān; tajriba (-yi 'amalī); ḥāṣil-i tajribah (Farhang-i fārsī-yi Duktur Mu'īn*), i.e., "testing,

practical experience, the result of experimentation." Elsewhere (IV 1128), N translates the word as "experiment." So *dar āzimūn* means that "through experience, we come to understand that."

33, l. 11–12 (D 28789)

The word *jān* ("spirit") occurs in the text four times, not three as in AA 348/4.

44, l. 9–10 (IV 3701)

"That which can be conceived concerning His Essence." N: "(As regards) that One whose Essence is an object of thought" (*ānkih dar dhātish tafakkur kardanīst*). N reads the pronoun *-ish* as referring to *ānkih* whereas it refers to *khudā* in the previous line; *ānkih* is often used as equivalent to *ānchih*. The sense of *tafakkur kardanī* is "*capable* of being thought," not simply "being an object of thought."

44, l. 16–17 (II 2812)

"The man veiled from the Attributes sees His handiwork." N: "The man that is debarred (from the Essence) sees the (Divine) actions (as proceeding) from the Attributes" (*ṣun' bīnad mard-i maḥjūb az ṣifāt*). N connects *az ṣifāt* with *bīnad*, whereas both the sense and the word order connect it with *maḥjūb*.

49, l. 34 (I 1133)

"In the breast." N: "In (the process of) coming forth" (*dar ṣudūr*). Linguistically, *ṣudūr* may be a *maṣdar* meaning "going out" or the plural of *ṣadr* ("breast"). True, *ṣudūr* is a technical term in the theosophical Sufism of Ibn al-'Arabī and his followers, as N notes in his commentary (cf. Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, Index of Technical Terms). But it is not a part of Rūmī's normal vocabulary in this sense. His usual preference for colloquialisms would lead one to read the word as the plural of the very common term *ṣadr*, i.e., "breasts" (the plural form is perfectly natural in Persian, whereas it would be awkward to maintain in English).

51, l. 36 (VI 45)

"In the light of the spiritual eye." N: "In the light of the Essence" (*dar nūr-i 'ayn*). *'Ayn* is rarely used in the technical sense of the absolute Essence of God, which possesses the Attributes of Knowledge, Life, etc., as N's translation would suggest (cf. the usage of the two terms *dhāt* and *'ayn* in Jāmī's *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*). Rather, it is employed to refer to a thing (or God) as it really is, not as it appears. Besides several other meanings, it also carries the sense of "eye" and is often used in Sufism to refer to the eye that sees spiritual things (again cf. the Index to Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*). Moreover, an eye which sees, whether physical or spiritual, is said to possess light (cf., e.g., D 9313, 11350); the occurrence of the word "light" in this verse as an attribute

of the *'ayn* makes it highly probable that "eye" is meant. In any case the point is the same: Through the spiritual light, ultimately derived from God, we see things as they truly are and thus come to understand that everything derives from God.

54, l. 5 (F 213/221)

"All opposites are similar." A: "And both at the same time are opposites" (*hamah aḍdād chunīn-and*). A's rendering is simply a mistranslation. Literally: "All opposites are like this:"

54, l. 8 (F 214/221)

"All opposites appear as opposites to us." A: "All things appearing opposite in relation to their opposites" (*jumla-ye aḍdād nisbat bi mā ḍidd mīnamāyad*). Instead of *mā ḍidd* A reads *mā-ḍadd* ("that which is opposite"), an Arabic phrase which is awkward and totally out of place.

66, l. 23 (M I 1109)

"Enraptured by." N: "In commerce with" (*dar sawdā*). In his commentary, N corrects his translation to "in the conception (or ken) of" but this is also farfetched. *Sawdā'*, originally "melancholy," came to mean the mad frenzy of love (cf. Rūmī's use of the adjective *sawdā'ī* in II 1381 [N: "frenzied"], D 28080). Here the meaning is that all creation is bewildered and distracted by the Intellect because of its tremendous and incomprehensible grandeur, just as the Intellect is bewildered by God.

69, l. 27–28 (M V 2124)

"To attract men to themselves." N: "For the purpose of carrying men (up to God)" (*az pay-i mardum-rubā'ī*, literally, "for stealing away people"). The total context of the teaching makes it clear that the separation of opposites is being discussed. Although all men return to God, His Wrath is not equivalent to His Mercy.

78, l. 21–22 (D 3324)

"Wounded when you are drawn back to Him." A 34/7: "Weary at the time of attraction" (*khastah bi-gāh-i ijtidhāb*). The context shows that the primary meaning of *khastah* is meant, not the secondary meaning, and that the "attraction" is toward God, just as it is in the case of a *majdhūb*.

80, l. 36–37 (M III 4166)

"Mercy may make the creatures worthy for tribulation." N: "By mercy he may suffer affliction" (*tā az raḥmat gardad ahl-i imtiḥān*). N seems to have understood *ahl* in the sense of "a person of", whereas the context, especially the following verse, makes me prefer the ren-

dering "worthy for."

81, l. 27–28 (M III 4181)

"You used to be a lion." N: "(Formerly) thou wert milk (sap)" (*shīr būdī*). N suggests in his commentary that "sap" refers to the vegetative soul; I think it much more likely that this *misrā'* is a paraphrase of the following line.

85, l. 8–9 (F 102/113)

"Since I have held you responsible and punished you for." A: "When I egged you on and urged you to commit" (*bar tu giriftam wa bar ān gunāh kih kardī zajr kardam*). A's version not only goes against the sense of the words, it is also repugnant in the context of Islamic theology, Sufi or otherwise.

88, l. 33 (D 32521)

"The ass's eye." AA: "The eye of wrong" (*chashm-i khar*). According to AA's note, Arberry translated this as I do, but the editors changed it—unaware of its technical sense. "The ego is like an ass." AA: "The carnal soul has fallen like an ass" (*nafs hamchū khar uftād*). N translates, "The senses resemble an ass" (45/6). As N understood, the verb *uftādan* here carries the sense of "to be" or "to turn out to be", not the literal "to fall." In any case, the whole point of the verse is the ass-nature of the ego; moreover, "falling down" is not a special attribute of asses that it should be mentioned here.

90, l. 22 (M V 1933)

"Whose friend is skin." N: "Whose skin is his friend" (*kih pūst bāshad dūstish*). N's version loses the sense of the verse by making the pronoun a modifier of skin, which is not justified by the text.

102 last line (MV 1773)

"Oh motes." N: "Oh children (of Adam)" (*ay dharāyir*). N states in his commentary that Rūmī uses *dharāyir* in the sense of *dhurrīyāt*. However, the line he quotes from the *Dīwān* in proof of his contention (D 12213) can also better be understood as meaning "motes"; A translates it there as "atoms" (148/8). In that verse, the *dharāyir* are contrasted with *āftāb* ("the sun"); in most cases, when Rūmī mentions "dustmotes" (usually *dharrāt* instead of *dharāyir*), he contrasts them with the sun, which, as it were, "gives them life" by making them stand out in the air (see, for example, M V 3581, D *797/2*, *1436/7*, 29557, 29940, 32537, all translated in the present work).

126, l. 6 (F 59/71)

"Self-sacrifice." A: "Giving" (*bākht*). The sense of the word *bākht* is much stronger than "giving" can suggest.

141, l. 21 (D *2293/7*)

"Jealousy looked at the two and laughed." AA 291/7: "Having seen both, it [posteternity] laughed in jealous pride at the two" (*bidīdah har du rā ghayrat bidīn har du bikhandīdah*). "Posteternity" cannot be the subject, since it is one of the objects; also, there is no grammatical reason for the "in"—if that were meant, the poet would have said *az ghayrat*.

141, l. 22–24 (D *2293/8*)

AA (291/8) ignore the *kih* which begins the line and indicates that it is a quotation, since it implies, "saying." In no case can *ṣiddīq* ("sincere") mean "adventurous."

149, l. 11 (D 26415)

"Lightning." AA 320/12: "Liberty" (*barq*). Apparently a typographical error.

152, l. 31–32 (F 32/43)

"As for example in the case of hypocrites. However, in every religion." A: "Another point: the prayer of hypocrites and the prayer of every religion" (*hamchūn namāz-i munāfiqān wa namāz-i har dīnī*). A has simply misread the passage, as the overall sense shows clearly; he was apparently led astray by the editor, who misplaced a comma (cf. the note on p. 226, l. 18, below).

153, l. 36 (F 174/183)

"Empty of the remembrance of God." A: "Free from God's hand" (*khālī nabāshī az yād-e ḥaqq*). Somehow A mistook the Persian *yād* (with *alif*) for the Arabic *yad* (without *alif*).

154, l. 15 (F 130/140)

A has dropped "prophets and."

161, l. 25 (F 176/184)

"God's Wont requires." A: "It is the way of the prophets" (*sunnat chinān ast*). *Sunnat* here must refer to God's mode of action (as in several Koranic verses, e.g., XXXIII 38, XXXV 43), since the point of the passage is precisely that *God* decides who is to be a prophet and how they are to act.

165, l. 41 (M VI 1883)

"Holy war." N: "Fighting" (*ghazā*). The sense of the passage demands that *ghazā* be synonomous with *jihād*, as moreover, it usually is.

166, l. 6–7 (M V 4024)

"To the general." N has dropped this phrase.

167, l. 36 (D 24218)

"Will that goat bite me, I wonder?" AA 289/5: "Why, that goat is biting me" (*ān buz 'ajab mā rā gazad*). AA have misunderstood the verse, as one would expect from the fact that their translation does not really make sense. *'Ajab* often serves to indicate a question.

167, l. 42–43 (D 24218)

"So that you may become rational." AA 289/7: "If you speak" (*tā gūyā shawī*). "If" goes against the sense of *tā*. Although *gūyā* literally means "speaking," so does the Arabic *nāṭiq* ("rational", as in, *al-insān ḥayawān nāṭiq*: "Man is a rational animal"); here the context shows that *gūyā* translates *nāṭiq* (a word commonly used in Persian in both its senses).

177, l. 10 (M VI 1361)

"Obviously." N: "Perceived by the senses" (*maḥsūs*). The sentence structure and meaning indicate that *maḥsūs* modifies *past* ("abject"), not *hasthā* ("existents/entities"). N's interpretation is rather forced, as if a commentator were trying to make an ordinary colloquial expression into something philosophical.

178, l. 10–11 (M VI 1448)

"A nothing-at-all has waylaid a nothing-at-all." N: "Has any naught ever waylaid any other naught?" (*hīch nī mar hīch nī rā rāh zadast*). N's interpretation is certainly possible, but by reason of the sense of the passage and parallelism between the two *miṣrā'*s, I prefer to read the two *hīch-nīs* as compound words.

178, l. 12–13 (M VI 1449)

"Your misunderstanding." N: "That which your understanding hath not conceived" (*nā ma'qūl-e tu*). N's rendering is slightly more literal, but it suggests that what you have not known until now will become known to you. However, the meaning is rather that you come to understand that your imagination had veiled you from understanding.

179, l. 32–40 (D 32701–03)

AA's rendering (398/6–8) ignores the *kih* ("that") in each line.

179, l. 41–42 (D 32704)

The sense shows that the sentence cannot be construed as interrogative (AA 398/9).

187, l. 37–38 (F 145–146/154)

"One out of a hundred-thousand reaches his goal." A: "Out of a hundred-thousand only one objective has been gained" (*az ṣad hazār yakī rā maqṣūd ḥāṣil shud*). A mistranslates, apparently having ignored the *rā*.

188, l. 9 (M II 3497)

"Hardship." N: "(Avoiding) entanglements" (*pīchāpīch*). N's interpretation is forced; he was apparently misled by the usual dictionary definitions. Dihkhudā's *Lughatnāma* adds to them the meaning "*sakhtī*" and cites this verse of Sanā'ī, probably Rūmī's favorite poet: *Tā bidāni kih waqt-i pīchāpīch/ Hīchkas mar turā nabāshad hīch.*

198, l. 3 (D 5057)

Although the word "Love" does not occur in this verse, but in the previous one, it is the subject of the verb, which A incorrectly translates as intransitive.

198, l. 26–27 (D 12296)

"Behold . . . . What did He say?" A 150/9: "Consider who said . . ." (*bīn kih lawlāk mā khalaqtu chich guft*). A mistranslates, seeming to read *chih* as *kih* (*kī*).

203, l. 16 (D 20545)

"Moon-faced." AA 240/4: "Rose-faced" (*māhrūyān*). AA mistranslate.

203, l. 20 (D 20546)

"Authority." AA 240/5: "King" (*sulṭān*). Here *sulṭān* is used in its original sense, as is shown among other things by the awkwardness of the AA rendering: The point is the king's own presence, not the presence of "his King."

207, l. 27–28 (M II 3279)

"Man's instrument is the extent of his need." N: "Man has instruments in proportion to his need" (*qadr-i ḥājat mard rā ālat buwad*). Gramatically, both readings are correct, but the overall context shows that N misses the point.

212, l. 32–33 (D 27832)

"The lover's grandeur is measured by that of his beloved." AA 335/11: "The measure of the beloved is the glory of the lover" (*andāza-yi ma'shūq buwad 'izzat-i 'āshiq*). The AA rendering reverses the subject-predicate relationship and conceals the sense of the verse.

213, l. 9 (D 2610)

"The Religion of Love." A 28/5: "The doctrine of Love" (*madhhab-e 'ishq*). Here and in the first *miṣrā'*, where he translates *madhhab* as "Doctrine of the sect," A tries to catch the particular technical connotation of *madhhab* in Islamic thought, where it usually means the school of Law to which a person belongs (Maliki, Hanbali, Hanafi, etc.). But Rūmī is not employing the term in this sense. In his terminology and in this context, it is synonomous with *dīn* (see for example M II 1770 and M I 233, translated above the verse under discussion; in both cases the two words are employed interchangeably;

likewise in D 17337).

215, l. 25 (F 114/125)

"What sort of Beloved is He?" A: "For it is as one beloved" (*chigūna ma'shūq ast*). A's rendering seems to have no basis in the text.

215, l. 33 (F 115/126)

"Unworthy." A: "Unlawful" (*nābāyist*). Linguistically, there is no basis for "unlawful." Moreover, the discussion obviously concerns the advanced stages of the Way, whereas a person who has not separated himself from that which is opposed to the Sharī'ah is not considered worthy even to enter the first stages of the Way.

220, l. 24–25 (D *1869*/last line)

"You voice . . . from my mouth." AA 231/10: "You might say that out of my mouth proceed" (*gū'ī zi dihān-e man*). Although *gū'ī* sometimes carries the sense of "you might say," here it does not. The fact that AA had to add the verb "proceed" is sufficient indication that *gū'ī* has to be taken in its literal sense.

221, l. 41 (F 36/47)

"To comprehend the Creator." A: "To comprehend" (*idrāk-i bārī*). A has dropped the word "Creator," which is essential to understand the point.

226, l. 18 (D 1525)

"Annihilation." A 16/6: "Courtyard". A reads *finā'* (a word absent from Rūmī's vocabulary), whereas *fanā'* is totally appropriate to the context. A also mistanslates the second *miṣrā'*, having been misled by the editor, who placed the quotation marks in the wrong place. The *kih* in *kandar* should have alerted A to the editor's mistake—over and above the fact that the context demands that Love be speaking "to the intellect." (I have had occasion to remark on the inability of those trained in traditional circles in Iran to grasp the purpose of punctuation, which has only come into use in Iran in the present century—and like so many other things from the West, in distorted form. See the English introduction to Jāmī's *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, p. xxxvii.)

235, l. 20–21 (M VI 4017)

"Has contemplated Unification." N: "Beholds it [Mount Qāf] by chance" (*dīd ān ittifāq*). There can be no "chance" involved in the vision of God, hence I have understood *ittifāq* in the sense of the identification and conformity of the servant with God, as in the state of subsistence.

240, l. 22–23 (M II 1258)

"Call it 'death' and 'pain.'" N: "You say to it 'Death and woe (to thee)'" (*tu gūyish marg u dard*). *Guftan chīzī chīzī rā* is often used in the sense of "calling something something." N's rendering is forced.

241, l. 3 (F 20/33)

"Drove her." A: "Surprized her" (*ajā'ahā*). The context shows how Rūmī understands the Koranic passage. A was misled by his insistence on employing his own translation of the Koran (*The Koran Interpreted*). Pickthall's version has "drove her."

241, l. 16 (M II 2516)

"At all." N: "As naught" (*hīch*). Here the word seems to be used in a positive rather than negative sense, especially since there is no negative verb. The meaning also demands this reading, since, if man should truly see himself as nothing, he would not worry about pain.

243, l. 32 (M I 1776)

"Union with His Face." N: "The favour of His . . . countenance" (*wiṣāl-i rū-yi ū*). I cannot see any reason not to consider *wiṣāl* as being used in its technical sense here, and I do not understand how it could mean "favor" in any context.

250, last line (F 228/235)

"Imagines the building of a house." A: "built a house" (*khayāl-i bunyād-i khānah kard*). A has ignored the word *khayāl*.

252, l. 33 (M VI 3720)

"Organs." N: "A (rational) faculty" (*ālatī*). There is no reason to suggest that the "rational faculty," i.e., the intellect, is meant; rather, the bodily organs and limbs in general are suggested. It is true that the word *ālat* is singular, but Persian abounds in singulars where English would use plurals.

254, l. 40 (F 7/19)

"Resurrection." A: "Great commotion" (*qiyāmat*). *Qiyāmat* is sometimes used metaphorically to mean a tremendous uproar, but here the only possible interpretation is the Koranic meaning.

255, l. 25 (M I 411)

N has dropped the word "spirit."

256, l. 25 (F 119/130)

"Why is this surprizing?" A: "How marvellous" (*chih'ajab mīāyad*). The existence of the verb makes it practically impossible to read the sentence as exclamatory.

259, l. 23 (M V 3921)

"Pearls." N: "Pure substance" (*gawharī*). The literal sense (both here and in the next verse) fits Rūmī's poetical temperament and

symbolical terminology much better than the philosophical rendering N prefers. But his interpretation provides a good commentary on the verses.

262, l. 3 (D 21238)

AA (250/1) drop "from the heart," and their awkward translation does not do justice to the second *miṣrā'*.

267, l. 7 (D *2331/2*)

"Thou hast shut my mouth." AA 297/2: "You have closed your mouth" (*dihān rā tu bastī*). The grammar allows either interpretation, but the first seems to fit the sense better.

267, l. 17 (D *2331/6*)

"The spirit." AA 297/6: "They" (*jān*). AA mistranslate.

269, l. 34 (M IV 2969)

"Water and clay." N: "Reel" (*gilābah*). N's interpretation is forced and belied by the context. The verse he cites in his commentary to support his reading has *kalābah*, not *gilābah* (although granted, the two are often written the same in manuscript).

270, l. 36 (F 74/86)

"Lowest of goods.' A: "Somewhat inferior" (*dūntar-e matā'hā*). A seems to have read *dūntar matā'hā*, but if that meaning were intended, it would have been much more natural to say *matā'hā-ye dūntar*. In any case, the context requires the emphasis provided by the superlative.

276, l. 19 (D 32451)

Job is correct, not Jacob (AA 394/5).

276, l. 21 (D 32452)

"In a beautiful way." AA 394/6: "For a desired end" (*bi marghūbī*). AA read the *yā'* as *nakarah*, while I read it as *maṣdarī*. Here the ordinary, colloquial sense of the word *marghūb* is intended, not its original Arabic meaning.

276, l. 31–32 (F 219–220/226)

"You are an analogy of your self; you are not this." A: "You are a likeness; you are not this of your own self" (*tu mithālī az khwud tu īn nīstī*). A reads with a comma after *mithālī*, I read with one after *khwud*; the latter reading accords more with the natural rhythm of the Persian and the meaning intended.

277, l. 15–17 (D 31651)

Since AA are not familiar with this discussion in its overall context, they miss the point totally. They translate *bī mithāl* (i.e., "without analogy") as "Oh incomparable one", even though it is not

preceded by *ay* (which would only be expected if anyone were to be addressed by such an unusual title). A word-by-word translation of the second *miṣrā'* can help to show where they have gone wrong there: "And (there) increases from analogy the imagination (= fantasy, mistaken idea) of God's-being-similar-to-creatures" (*wa afzāyad az mithāl khayāl-i mushabbihī*). AA take *waṣf* ("Attributes, description") in the first *misrā'* as the subject of *afzāyad*, whereas its subject is *khayāl*; *khayāl* they translate as "magnitude", which it cannot mean in any context; and finally they translate *mushabbihī* as "one who likens you" (taking the *yā'* as *nakarah*), whereas in effect it is another form of the word *tashbīh*, the theological concept of comparing God to things (cf. the word *munazzihī* in the following verse and in D 36307).

279, l. 15–16 (F 44/56)
"Seen only by him." A: "Particular" (*makhṣūṣ*). A's rendering is vague; mine, though less literal, makes the point.

279, l. 19–20 (F 44–45/56)
"In the same way he is shown his own form in magnificent beauty." A: "Imaged forth to him and displayed in mighty beauty" (*wa hamchunīn ṣūrat-i khwīsh binamāyand bi jamāl-i 'aẓīm*). A ignores the phrase *ṣūrat-i khwīsh* and the fact that *wa hamchunīn* begins a new sentence.

293, l. 39–40 (F 126/137)
"Wherein, after all, every happiness is to be found." A: "Where is the last of all pleasures" (*kih ākhar hama-yi khwoshīhā ānjāst*). A reads *ākhir-i*, but this goes against both the natural flow of the Persian and the significance of "nonexistence" in Rūmī's teachings.

294–295 (F 113/124)
"But he becomes bored." A: "Who is weary" (*malūl*). A does not recognize that the previous sentence is parenthetical, as is demanded by the overall sense of the passage. He translates *ru'yat* (the "vision of God") by "ocular vision," without explaining what is meant. And he ignores the theological context of the debate, and thus is able to misunderstand the conditional sense of "this would only be so if" (*īn waqtī bāshad kih*), which he translates, "It is in the moment when." (For A's reading to be correct grammatically, the verb would have to be *ast* instead of *bāshad*.)

302, l. 38 (D *2509/3*)
"He made a royal gesture, meaning, 'One . . .'" AA 321/3: "He signaled so royally that the madmen" (*ishārat kard shāhānah kih jast az band dīvānah*). AA misunderstand the sense of the verse. *Kih* here indicates the King's words and there is no linguistic basis for the word

"so."

303, l. 3 (D *2509*/5)

"Devils." AA 321/5: "*Divān*" (i.e., the council of state). The word *dīwān* can mean either; in the context, the former sense seems more likely.

309, l. 1 (D 29940)

"Thou art hidden because of Thy jealousy." AA 361/3: "The cause of your jealousy is that you are hidden" (*sabab-i ghayrat-i tust ānkih nihānī*). AA follow N's interpretation (47/3). Grammatically, either reading is possible; but in the context of Rūmī's teachings, the former is more logical.

309, l. 19 (F 70/82)

"To happen to her." A: "She would turn to others" (*bar īshān rawad*; A reads, *bar-i īshān*). Both renderings are faced with difficulties. I take *īshān* (literally: "they") to refer to the witness; a plural pronoun is often used to refer to a single person, especially when respect is shown. The fact that Rūmī employs *ū* ("her") in the previous sentence does not necessarily contradict this interpretation, since the colloquial nature of the text means that he is not concerned with consistency. A tries to avoid the awkward meaning produced by reading *bar-i* by translating *īshān* as "others," which is rather farfetched. If he is correct in his reading, one would logically translate the sentence as "She would turn to them" (i.e., to the people to whom she was shown), but there seems no reason for her to do such a thing.

310, l. 21–22 (D *1705*/10)

"We are speaking to children just learning the alphabet." AA 213/10: "We are children of the alphabet" (*bā ṭifl-i abjadīm*, literally: "We are with the child of the alphabet"). AA ignore the *bā*, which carries the sense of "speaking to someone" (*bā kasī būdan*). Again, the total context of Rūmī's teachings (see III, E, 3) leaves no room for doubt as to the meaning of the verse.

310, l. 28 (D *1705*/13)

"Movements." AA 213/13: "Boasts" (*karr u farr*). The Arabic phrase carries the literal significance of "attack and retreat," but it is employed in Persian as a compound word meaning "coming and going" or "pomp and splendor." Here the former sense is implied, for the point is that a woman does not have the "pomp and splendor" of a warrior.

326, l. 13 (M IV 742)

"Meeting with the Beloved." N: "Composure" (*ijtimā'*, literally: "coming together"). The term may carry either sense, although "gatheredness" or "collectedness" (equivalent to *jam'*, the opposite of *taf-*

riqah) would render it better than "composure." But in view of the technical nature of the term *khayāl*, the first rendering seems preferable.

327, l. 38–39 (M III 96)

N's translation makes *mardān* in the second *miṣrā‘* the subject of the verb in the first. In fact, the structure of the sentence and the context show that the two *miṣrā‘*'s are meant to contrast with each other, and that the subject of the verb in the first *miṣrā‘* must be taken in the normal sense of an unspecified plural subject, i.e., people in general—who are thus opposed to "men."

348, l. 23–25 (D *1145*/12)

Both N (25/12) and A (147/12) make the first *miṣrā‘* a single compound sentence. In fact, "form" refers to form in the previous verse (which A translates as "shape," thus hiding the connection). The poet protests that here you cannot speak about form, as he just has. Why not? Because the spirit mirroring the divine Light will show itself through the felt covering, i.e., its outward manifestation—a "felt pouch" being where iron mirrors were kept for safekeeping. Closer attention to Rūmī's teaching about the opposition between form/body and meaning/spirit would have prevented the mistranslation.

348, l. 32–33 (*1145*/15)

"Tale bearer's house." A 147/15: "Ogling-house." N 25/15: "House . . . as a dealer in amorous glances" (*ghammāz-khānah*). The word *ghammāz* can support all three interpretations, but the first meaning is suggested by the second *miṣrā‘*, which states that "light" (*nūr*) is *ghammāz*. Light does not "ogle" or "deal in amorous glances," but it does give information and tell tales, since it makes things manifest. N's rendering is better than A's, since he maintains some connection between the first and second *miṣrā‘*s. But the insufficiency of his interpretation is shown by the fact that in the first *miṣrā‘* he adds "amorous" to explain the sense of *ghammāz*, while in the second he had to drop it, since "amorousness" is hardly an attribute of light, whether in Persian or English.

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The following abbreviations have been employed:

A. A. J. Arberry, *Mystical Poems of Rūmī*, First Selection, Poems 1–200. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968.

AA. A. J. Arberry et al., *Mystical Poems of Rūmī*, Second Selection, Poems 201–400. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1979.

D. (*Dīwān-i Shams-i Tabrīz*) B. Furūzānfar ed., *Kulliyyāt-i Shams yā dīwān-i kabīr*, 10 vols. Tehran: University of Tehran Press, 1336–46/1957–67. Italicized numerals refer to the number of the ghazal, while numerals in Roman type refer to the number of the line; when a ghazal has been translated in its entirety, numbers of lines are not mentioned.

F. *Fīhi mā fīhi*, ed. B. Furūzānfar, Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1348/1969; A. J. Arberry (trans.), *Discourses of Rūmī*. London: John Murray, 1961.

M. *The Mathnawī of Jalālu'ddīn Rūmī*, ed. and trans. R. A. Nicholson, 8 vols. London: Luzac, 1925–1940.

MK. *Maktūbāt*, ed. M. F. Nafiz Uzluk. Istanbul: Sebat basımevi, 1937; ed. Y. Jamshīdīpūr and Gh. Amīn. Tehran: Bungāh-i Maṭbū'ātiyya-yi Pāyandah, 1335/1956.

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N. R. A. Nicholson, *Selected Poems from the Dīvāni Shamsi Tabrīz*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1898; repr. 1961.

R. *Rubā'iyyāt*, published as volume 10 of D (above).

Sources are listed in reverse order according to the number of times cited (i.e., MS, R, MK, F, M, D)

M: *Mathnawī*

D: *Dīwān*

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ISBN 0-87395-724-5